

Patterns

48TH EDITION

Patterns 48th edition

VISITING AUTHORS / JUDGES

LINDA GREGERSON 's third book of poems, *Waterborne*, received the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award in 2002. Her earlier books include *The Woman Who Died in Her Sleep* (1996) and *Fire in the Conservatory* (1982), as well as two books of criticism, *Negative Capability* (2001) and *The Reformation of the Subject* (1995). She is presently at work on *Magnetic North*, a new collection of poems, and *The Social Life of Poems*, a collection of essays. Her poems appear in many journals and anthologies, including *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Yale Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Triquarterly*, *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *New England Review*, and many others. Her awards include the Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Levinson Prize from *Poetry* magazine, the Consuelo Ford Award from the Poetry Society of America, grants and fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, the National Humanities Center, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Guggenheim Foundation. Gregerson is the Frederick G. L. Huetwell Professor and Professor of English at the University of Michigan.

ERIN MCGRAW (A.B., University of California, Davis, 1979; MFA, Indiana University, 1986) has taught at DePauw University, the University of Cincinnati, and is currently Professor of English at the Ohio State University. A recipient of fellowships from Stanford University and the Yaddo and Macdowell Foundations, her short fiction and essays have appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The Southern Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, and many other journals. She is the author of four books, *The Good Life* (Houghton Mifflin, 2004), *The Baby Tree* (StoryLine Press, 2002), *Lies of the Saints* (Chronicle Books, 1996), and *Bodies at Sea* (University of Illinois Press, 1989).

Patterns 48th edition

A P R I L 2 0 0 6

P R E F A C E

The name of the magazine is Patterns, and this year we call your attention to the varying patterns in terms of the content of this publication from year to year. If you were to peruse issues going back over the last five or six years, you might notice that a certain pattern emerges: a tendency for one or two exceptional student writers to dominate, walking away fairly often with the lion's share of the space and the awards. Last year was no exception, with a very gifted writer, Grace Vermeer, taking first place awards in all three writing genres. Since the judges who volunteer each year to help determine the written works worthy to be included in Patterns see only the poems, stories and essays—no names—the writing speaks for itself, and so it happens that a small number of authors sometimes claims a majority of the space in a particular issue of our magazine. In this year's issue, by contrast, we see a return to what might be called a more democratic representation of different writers on campus. Although the number of poems and prose pieces published each year remains roughly the same, last year's issue featured a total of only seven student writers, while this year we congratulate more than twice as many, fifteen in all, for having their work accepted for publication in these pages.

A second variation in the pattern of things can be seen in the absence this year of an essay category. From year to year, the quantity and quality of work submitted in the different genres ebbs and flows. Just two years ago a record eight essays were selected for inclusion while just a handful of poems made the cut—this year, due to a paucity of entries in the essay category, we've elected to make fiction the sole prose category. No precedent is set, however; we'll look next year to reestablish a solid showing from our campus essayists.

The Patterns Visiting Artists Forum continues the pattern of excellence that was established several years ago when the Forum was initiated (thanks especially to the inspiration and grant-writing ability of professor Jim Frank). This year we are exceptionally lucky to host two writers of sterling reputations: Linda Gregerson of the University of Michigan and Erin McGraw of Ohio State University. Our thanks go out to the Michigan Council for the Arts for once again helping us to bring such fine writers to SC4 as judges and visiting writers. Special thanks, too, go to professors Gregerson and McGraw, writers who command national and international attention, for agreeing to participate in the Forum.

Finally, we the editors of Patterns offer our congratulations to all the students whose writing and artwork is included in the 48th edition. Thanks to you we can proudly maintain a nearly fifty year old tradition of publishing the very best of SC4's artistic talent.

First Place Art

ENFORCER LA TÊTE



Matthew

JORDE



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Second Place Art

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Third Place Art

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Yvonne

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FINE ARTS AWARD

Carrie West – “Who is Carrie West”? Gallery watchers at St. Clair County Community College have been asking this question for the past three years. Who is this person who is doing these complex designs, the challenging drawings, the free expressive color problems which are like paintings, or the watercolor costume designs which look like illustrations of period dress from an historic collection? Is this really the same person? Do you know her? Well, not really...

Faculty know her as a student who smiles and never misses a class, whose eyes scan the “world” and yet sees beyond this world to the world of possibilities – the conscious and unknown world of the Artist. This is the very personal and private world which Carrie shares through her art. Hers is not a world of sound and voices, but a world of vision which she shares through her art and compels the gallery viewer to talk, comment, question. How? Where? What? – and ultimately who is this person who is creating this Art which gives these feelings? Where is this world?

This is the world of Art created by an Artist – the person who students know as a silent presence moving through the halls or cloistered in a studio with only the sound of a scratching pen on smooth illustration board or a pencil catching the surface of a rough, textured paper. Carrie West has moved quietly by herself through her time at St. Clair County Community College, taking the classes which have intrigued her. She looked at the menu and sampled – never ordering the five course meal, but trying some art, music, theatre and maybe this time, philosophy. Carrie is continuing the education of an artist because she knows that this is how she is made and now she is exploring all the possibilities which she needs to feed her soul and ultimately to share her vision with all who will look and ask the questions. The Patrick Bourke Award honors Carrie West for her past, her presence and her future as she explores and defines her Art. -David Korff

PORTRAIT OF A GIRL



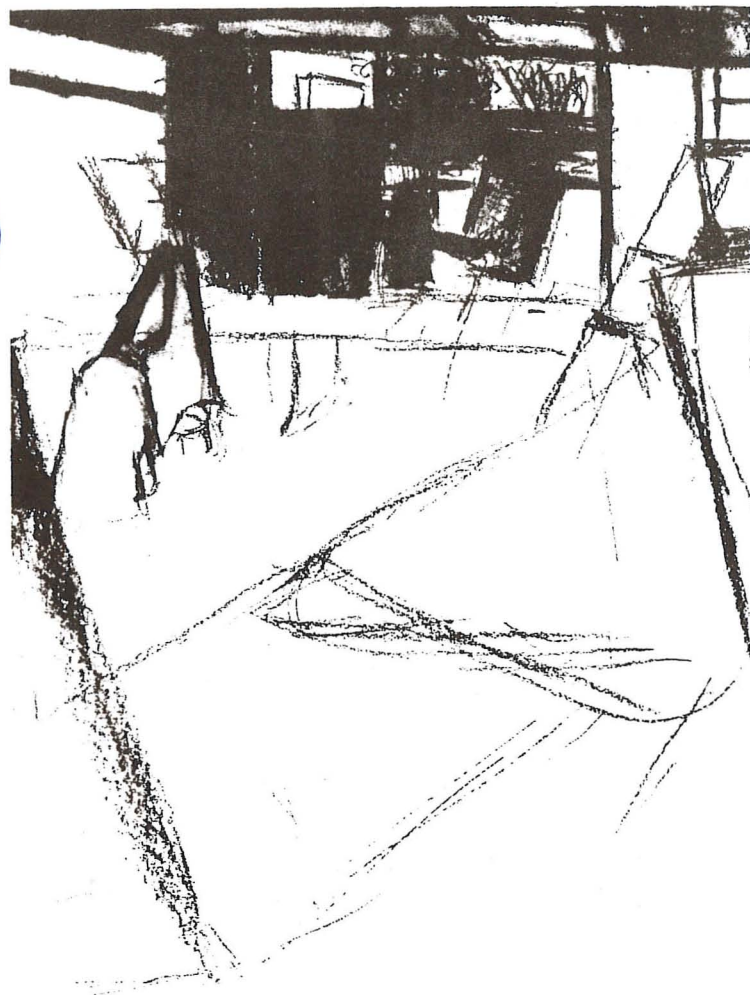
Carrie

WEST

Honorable Mention

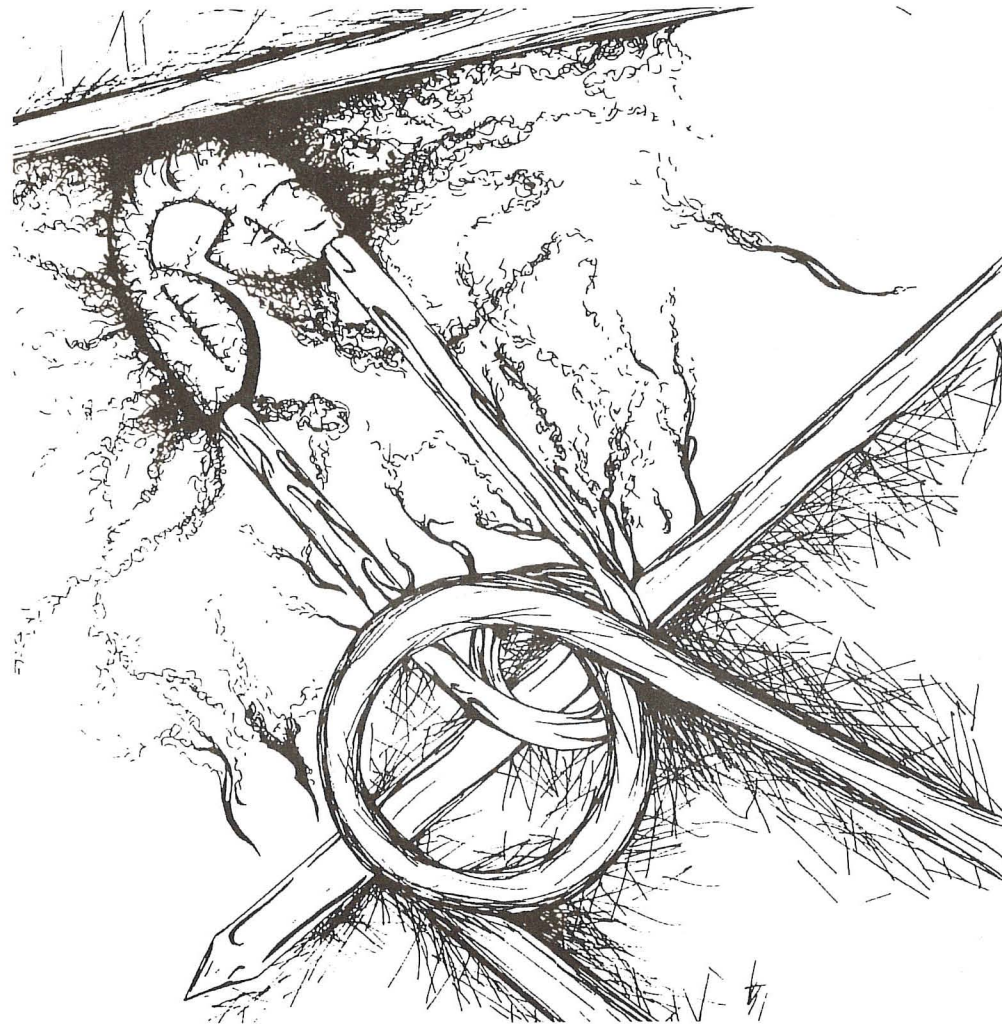
C A F E

Kyle
NOLAN



Honorable Mention

PAFETY SINS



Chad

NAVARRO

Kathleen Nickerson Award

*Kathy Nickerson Award for Excellence in Poetry
(formerly the Blanche Redman Poetry Award)*

THE PHOTOGRAPH

SUSAN BRUSSEAU

Susan

"The Photograph" moves austere through its initial lines of description and only gradually introduces the shades of feeling ("sun-/Beams dappling") and judgment ("That homemade, pink plaid dress / With the hideous / Puffed sleeves") that suggest its unblinking objectivity is only part of the story. We are nearly halfway through the poem before we learn for certain that the girl in the photograph is the speaker's self. The progressive revelation is beautifully cadenced; the emotional context of remembered thwarting is rigorously indirect and all the more effective for it. -Linda Gregerson

Found in a drawer,
A photograph,
Black and white
With a ragged edge.
A girl 12 or 13
Near a window with the sun-
Beams dappling her face.
That homemade, pink plaid dress
With the hideous
Puffed sleeves and bows,
Those hateful braids,
Like ropes of pitch,
The handles of me
My brothers grabbed.
The shabby chair,
In front of the window
Looking out at Grandma's
Crabapple trees that

We could never climb.
The road out front
That leads away from
Memories of home,
From the life I lived
When I was twelve.
Like a double exposure,
The dreamy face of a child
With a hint of the face
Fifty years would add.
Why was I waiting?
Who or what was coming?
The school bus?
My friends?
Escape from boredom?
From being twelve?
Or just waiting
For life to happen?

Honorable Mention

LAKE MICHIGAN



Chris

BASSEY

First Place Poetry

THE UNPLEASANT REPERCUSSIONS OF AN OVERLY EAGER JURY

First Place Poetry

The mystery at the heart of this poem is part of its strength. Is the jury a metaphor? The clue to an actual setting or "plot"? Are the difficult shades of judgment (white on white, ivory and pearl) meant to suggest a subtle racial politics or rather the universal calibrations of ethics and truth? The poem refuses to be "solved" in such terms. Instead, it focuses on the structure and ironies of judgment, the tensions between "unpleasant repercussions" and over-eagerness, between "new depths" and "a good shallow effort." The poem does a remarkable amount of work in little space. -Linda Gregerson

Our experiment was melodramatic,
naked, staring at white on white,
dying to strain;
trying to decipher the ivory from the pearl.
We've reached new depths.

--a good shallow effort.

Honorable Mention

THE PIANO ROOM



Noelle

Second Place Poetry

AN EVENING BY THE LAKE

The enchantment of this poem has to do with its simultaneous immersion in and respectful distance from nature. The speaker is willing to take anthropomorphic liberties with nature's other denizens (the birds are "mourning the death / of another day") but then confesses that their motives and urgencies are mostly illegible to the human observer ("They hurry to finish the / work of birds"). The fine culmination of this insider/outsider perspective occurs at the end of the fifth stanza, with "each wave slightly changing the shore/like an unsatisfied artist." We know who that unsatisfied artist is likely to be; we know the lake has no such thing in mind; we are in the midst of a made world, its maker both rueful and wonderfully determined to be at risk. -Linda Gregerson

Dusk is approaching.

The birds warn me,
each mourning the death
of another day.

They hurry to finish
the work of birds.

I sit still on my stoop
and let the sights
and the sounds of the eve

wash my soul clean.

The crickets alert all to their presence,
frogs serenade the land with their lovely song.

I can hear the owl calling,
waking from his fitful sleep.
"Hello, sweet night!" he is saying.

"Hello, sweet life!"
The squirrels chirp back,
chastising him for his noise.

Melissa Ann
D'AVALOS

The geese fly overhead,
talking, as only geese can.
Searching for a place to rest.
Their feathers buzz
with a comforting hum,
each one following the other.

Even the lake seems alive.
Its whooshing and rushing
almost breath-like, splashing the earth
and reminding all of its presence.
Each wave slightly changing the shore,
like an unsatisfied artist.

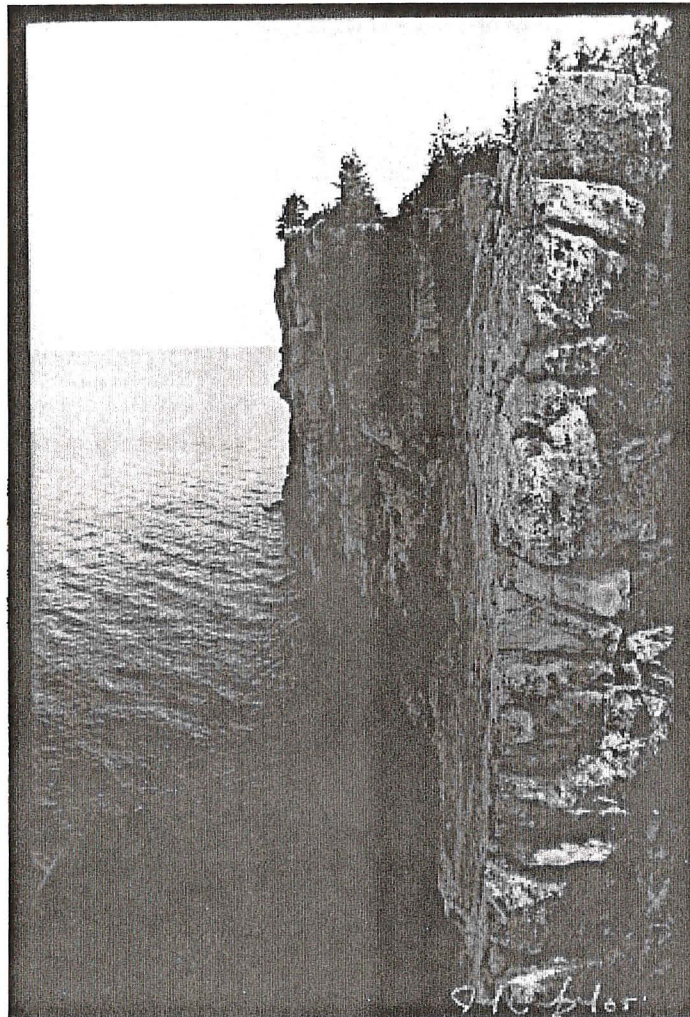
The chilled night air encloses me
like a damp blanket.
The sun is fighting, valiantly
perhaps, to stay.
Casting its last feeble rays
across the land.

I journal these humble thoughts,
to capture dusk's beauty.
So I may remember my
small place in this land
and add my own tiny mark
to the world.

Honorable Mention

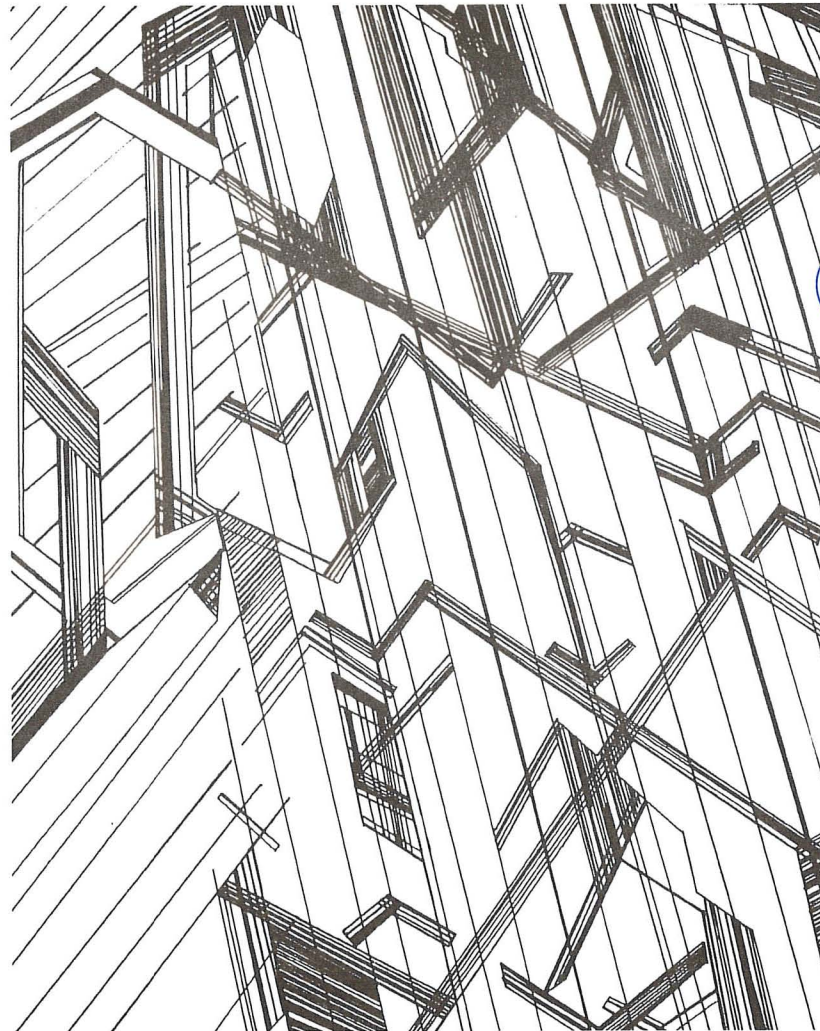
S U M M E R

Jake
CARUFFEL



Honorable Mention

INDUSTRIALIZED LIGHT



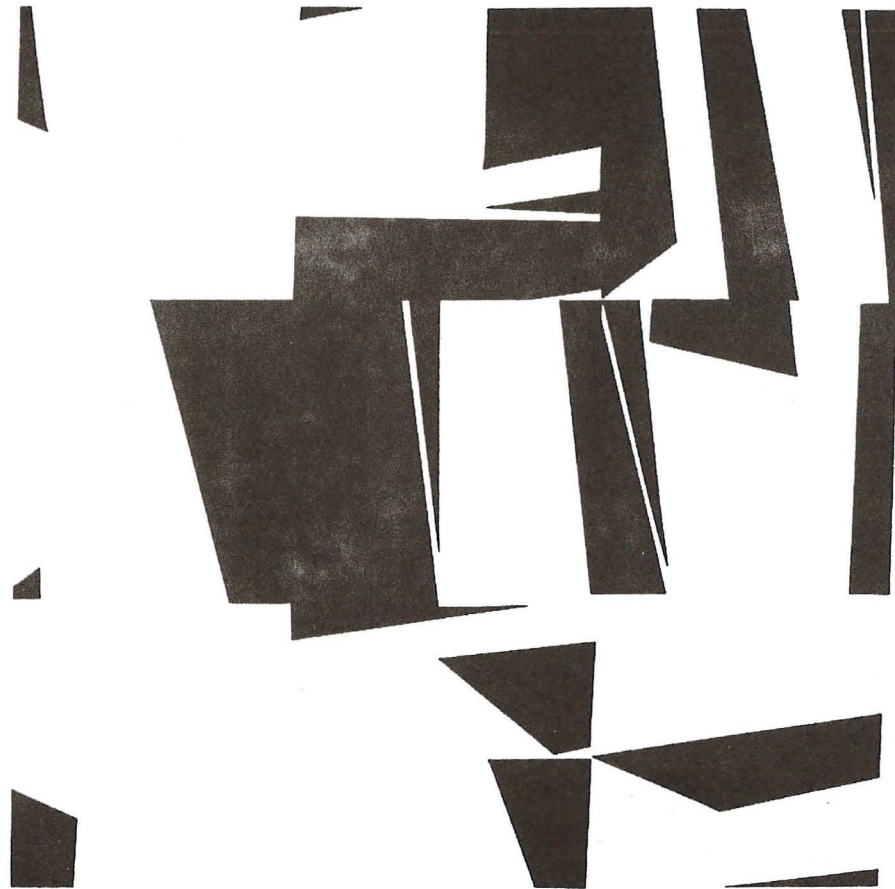
Robert
SAYERS

Honorable Mention

LEFT TO RIGHT /



TOP TO BOTTOM



Travis

DUNDAS

Selection of Merit

Rafie
BOOMS

THE MAN AT THE WINDOW

(on a painting by Gustave Caillebotte)

Upholstered arms reach out
away
from the indifferent, rich company.
I reach out
and pull open
great panes of polished glass,
trapped also
in their casements.

Below, a street.
I see the morning blossom
life in green and pink.
Time turns past me
like the carriage wheels
that carry people on their way,

away.

The pale, angled,
shadow of myself
twists and fades
from the window.

I am alone.

Selection of Merit

F A T C A T

Fat Cat,
Flat on her Back,
Lounging
Gentle Humming
Black hair purpled
With the morning sun.
Head lolling Back,
Velvet paws
Outstretched against
Egyptian Cotton blankets
That hide
My legs.

Jenna V.
GRAY

Selection of Merit

CANDY NECKLACES

Andria

LUMBARDO

We walk into the Hobby Shop

With ten cents in our purses

And walk out with Candy Necklaces

Then rip the wrapper open

The thin string of many colors

Tastes so sweet

I put mine around my neck

Before we jump on bikes

Ride to the playground

And run for the swings

I bite one piece at a time

Off the tight strand of candy jewelry

The round beads

Are disappearing quickly

As it often did in the summers

Of our childhood

Selection of Merit

A P L A C E T O R E M E M B E R

Mama always loved flowers, birds, rocks,
and trees.

Flowers thrived with her touch.

Birds seemed to show off just for her.

She knew the secret names of rocks.

And trees always stood straighter when she
was around.

How sad—we wait to put them together,
To create a special place in the yard to go
To remember...Mama, her flowers, birds,
rocks, and trees.

First the pond, built with her treasured rocks,
Saving the best ones for the waterfall.

Some, we found ourselves, and others just
showed up,

They all found a spot to live in or around the
pond.

Rocks and water belong together

They are each good, but better together.

Rocks make the water sing and

Water brings out the rocks' secret beauty.

Mama would save all summer

To buy a few bulbs to plant in the fall.

Now, money is no object:

The flowers compete in abundance and
grandeur.

All shapes and colors, delicate and hardy,

The riot of color is deafening.

We fill every inch of the garden

With the desire to please

Susan

Mama, with the flowers, birds, rocks, and
trees.
Of course, the birds come flitting
Dancing from rock to rock.
Hummingbirds kiss the phlox,
Robins splash in the birdbath,
Wrens scold the neighborhood for fun,
And compete with the serenade of Warblers.
A crosstree from an old clothesline serves as
an
Avian housing tract.
We watch to see who will take up residence.
We watch them feather their nests and guard
and bicker
“Like children,” Mama would say.
The trees stand by, waving to the garden
pond,
Tossing their leaves in their excitement.

Elm, Maple, and Mountain Ash, they ring
the garden,
Overlooking but not overstepping.
We watch, we wonder, but mostly we
remember
Mama and her flowers, birds, rocks, and
trees.

Selection of Merit

LO QUE SABE



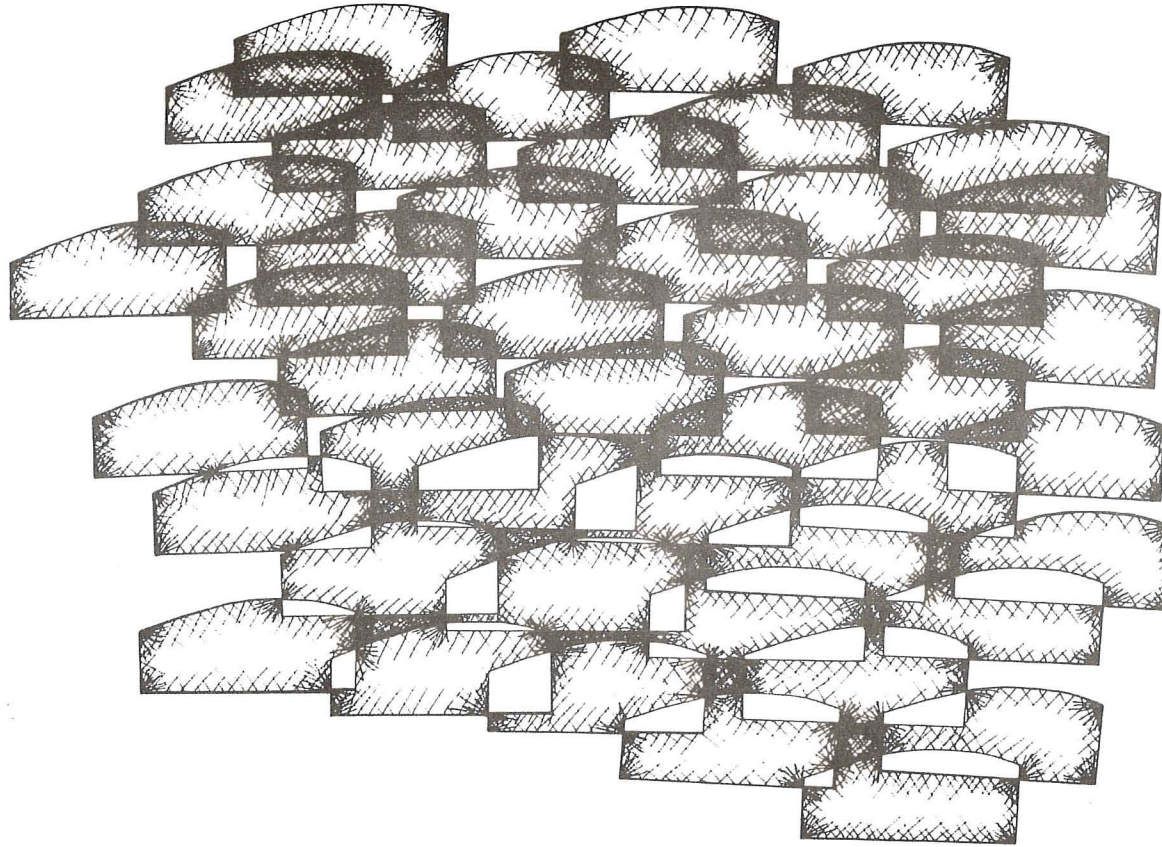
Carolyn

Selection of Merit

TRANSFORMATION

Rebekah

WALLACE



Selection of Merit

PEBBLES ON THE PORCH

Next to the porch, under the bushes

Lay the stones we sought out.

I put them in order—largest to smallest

Classified them by color—White, Gray,
Black

I arranged them into my name.

When Tina waited for her boyfriend

She dug up and threw the stones.

First one

Here

And

There-

Later handfultatime.

I called for Tina on sunny afternoons

“Let’s draw pictures on the porch.”

Hopscotch, Shadows, a Rainbow.

Chalk wears down, but the stones will write

A thin white line as long as I wish.

Bethany

ROSS

Selection of Merit

A N E S C A P E

RATE
BOOMS

A breath of air
and freedom,
captured in a summer dream.

Crunching, golden moments,
a day written light and green.

Pedaling into fantasy,
sweet incense

rises

up

as I sail past.

Yellow dreaming butterflies
weave

sunbeams into golden fields.

The soft light whispers
spokes' thin shadows on the ground.

This moment,
this day,
this life is mine,
as long as this ride lasts.

Selection of Merit

WORK SHOP



Carrie

WEST

Selection of Merit

AND TO THE JURORS

Eddie

PERRY

No vendettas shall follow you in here.

These matters will not bend to personal
subjection.

The right is not yours to incorporate
passions.

A conflict of interest may leave you
grazing on razors and sleepless nights,
biting the skin beneath your finger nails.

Selection of Merit

G O D A S A W H I R L W I N D , A N E X T E N S I O N O F P I

A light lost among a million blinding rays
a cyclone of bright white.

Churning the contents
folding breath into dormant vessels
meringue.

In i t i a t e the niche of life,
such fits amidst the sequence as
the center of the
circle.

Equal distance to all others
the eye of the tornado
surrounded by impetuous current
the vortex of the storm
with a harness on the
chaos. though the
winds are all
oblivious.

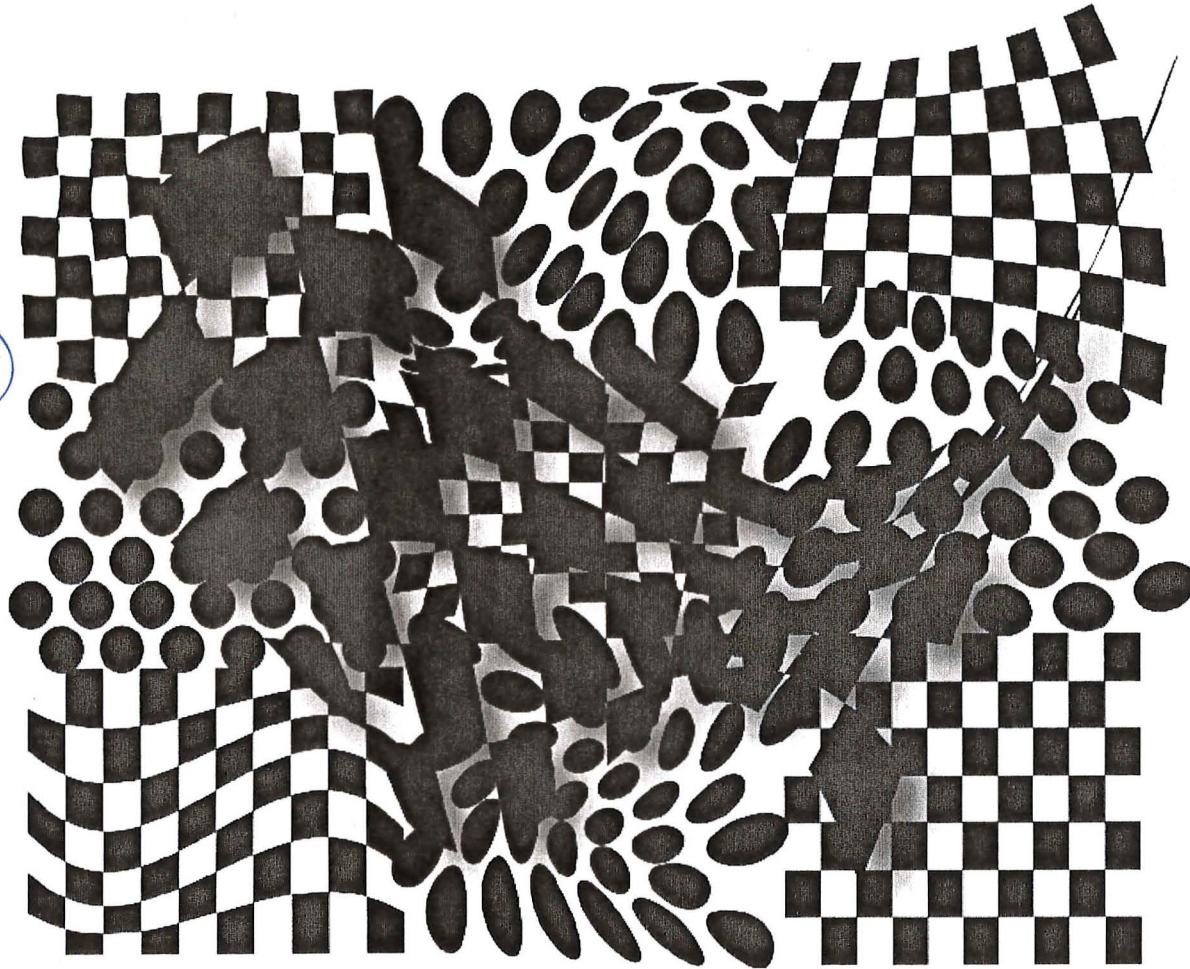
Eddie

P E R R Y

Selection of Merit

SWIMMING IN CONTRAST

Cindy BADLEY



First Place Short Story

ONCE UPON A DREAM

Several kinds of dreams are pondered in this vividly written tale about hope and hesitation. The main character sets out on a journey that becomes far more extensive than she had ever intended, creating a fable of self-realization and self-creation that is charged throughout with sharp, deft comedy. -Erin McGraw

C'est un voyage direct aux Etats-Unis. Veuillez apprécier votre vol.

I don't even care what she just said, I thought to myself. Just as long as it can be roughly translated into, "Yes, Alex, we are now removing our French claws from your back. You are welcome to return home from this vacation from Hell. Have a nice Flight. Oh, and I promise not to come around and ask you any stupid French questions during this enormously long trip."

Yeap, that's all I want to hear from your fancy, French yaps today. I tossed my carry-on into the surprisingly empty seat beside me, with what must have been too much disgust, because the lanky, blonde woman across the aisle from me looked on with an ugly expression on her puckered face. I raised my eyebrows in a snotty way before I noticed that she was reading *The Prince of Tides*, which was lucky for her, because if I thought a Parisian was looking at me like that, I might have started World War II (or

at least one of the Gulf Wars). Instead, I just gave her a "Mind your own business" glance, and slipped my hand into my cool leather bag to retrieve a copy of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

I did my best to block out the flight attendant repeating her speech in English and read at the same time, and I made it through four pages, before my tiredness consumed me, and I wandered into a dream-filled sleep.

I was in the woods. Everything was white, including the grass, which was cool and wet against my feet. Wow. Am I dreaming? It seems so real... my feet are freezing, actually... But I must be dreaming. People don't just teleport from an airplane to... where the Hell am I? I decided I was definitely dreaming and could therefore do no wrong: "keep walking," I told my feet. I want to figure this place out. My feet obeyed, and when I had walked for a good five minutes without seeing anything besides white trees and white grass and white fog, my feet decided on their own that they must now break in to an

Jessica

easy jog. And then a brisk jog. Jogging, and panting now, I realized how anxious I was to see what lay on the outside of these lifeless woods. My poor feet could simply not go fast enough. I was running now. Running, and breathlessly hoping that I would see a break in the expressionless forest, hoping that I would see anything. Everything here looks the same! And then there was a clearing. It was about 15 feet ahead, and was that a flash of brown I saw? My running quickly turned into walking. Even though I was certain that I was dreaming, everything felt real, including the apprehension of seeing what was just beyond the tree line.

I inched toward the clearing where I saw that there was, indeed, some color. A door. An immense, brown door that was splintered and appeared as if it had been standing there for 437 years. It must have been about 20 feet tall and looked outstandingly heavy. The hinges and door handle were worn, and there was a chunk missing from the top where it arched. I looked around in every direction and thought it safe to step closer. When I was close enough to touch the door, I did. I reached a wary hand for the door handle and let the cool metal slide in my palm. I juggled the idea of pulling it. Just as I was about to tug on it and see what happened, I noticed that there was also door knocker; a tiny door knocker, just big enough to fit two of

my fingers. It was down by my waist. What good is a door knocker that's that small? And why on Earth is it so far down? I shrugged, and absentmindedly drummed its tiny, brass skeleton against the wood, before returning my attention to the handle. As soon as my hand once again reached its metallic curve, however, there was a shudder, and the door began to move. The door swung, and, to my surprise, there was a space behind it, where there had previously just been woods. It was just like the wall that the Roadrunner paints to look like a road, which the Coyote always crashes into, no matter how often he has fallen for it before. I placed each of my hands on the rough wood of the stupendous door, and peered around it, bracing myself, carefully. Behind it—inside, I suppose I should say—there was nothing but blackness; like a small, black room, where nothing—if there was even anything there—was discernable.

"H-Hello?", I choked out, suddenly remembering every horror movie I'd ever seen. Nothing. Hmm. "Hello?" I repeated, more poised. Still nothing. But wait. I did hear something. A scuttle, like little feet shuffling as quickly as they could. Before I could even think about what had made such a noise, there was a tiny creature before me. I was a little dumbfounded, but I was much too interested to worry about being afraid.

Besides, it looked friendly enough. It was a dwarfish, little critter with tremendous ears that hung down by its chin, and teeny blue eyes that were no more than half-an-inch apart. It stood very erect, and wiped its button nose with one of its over-sized hands.

"Ya don't have ta bang that banger so loud don't-cha-know," it said in the smallest voice. I figured it was a girl, because her voice, while barely audible, was clearly feminine. She almost sounded like a child. "Wur just a'packing."

"Err..." I wasn't sure what to say, or what to think, for that matter. "P-Packing, you say?" For some reason, I felt like polite conversation was the way to go, "Packing for what?"

"Silly Sally," she said in the same muted voice, "Ya know why wur a'packing. Yur late, bytheway. I been a'waiting a long time. Didcha bring yur suitcase?"

I was confused, and had my head halfway in a "no" shake, when I felt something heavy in my hand. I was startled, and dropped it immediately. A decrepit-looking suitcase, with what looked like a pair of footy pajamas and a Geometry worksheet hanging out, was lying, freshly abandoned on the cold, moist ground. For reasons unknown to me, I picked it up like I had known it was there all the time. "Yeah," I said, "I've got it"

"Let's ge'on with it then. We don't

got long"

"Okay."

She turned on the spot and disappeared into the blackness. Into the void, I thought to myself. Do I really want to go in there? I figured I might as well. I put one foot past the threshold, then the other. When I was standing with my entire body within the walls of what seemed to be a hallway, I looked back, Better leave that open, I thought about the door, If I want to go back, that's my only way.

Walking into the unknown was frightening, and it gave me an excited apprehension that's hard to describe. With every step I took, the intoxication of excitement came closer to overcoming my fear. And as I put the door farther and farther behind me, I left with it the idea of going back the way I came. For a while, I could hear the pint-sized feet scurrying ahead of me, but they soon pulled ahead, and I was traveling, unguided, into the unfamiliar. I was unafraid.

Soon, I noticed something glowing, dully, ahead of me. As I stepped closer, a clock began to take shape. It was a normal clock, except that, at the very top, between the 12 and the 1, there was a 13. And, at that moment, both hands came to rest on it. It chimed once, twice, three, and four times. Each chime brought with it a bit more warmth to the chilly hall. Five, six, seven, eight, and nine chimes.

Each letting in a bit more light, until the hall was flooded in brilliance. Ten, eleven, twelve chimes. I became aware of my sleeping body, my real body, curled, uncomfortably in an upright seat. The thirteenth chime sounded in the form of words, "Excuse me," the words said.

My eyes opened to the world of a quiet plane filled with a sleeping community. All were asleep but two, it seemed: myself, and the person who had awakened me. "Do you think I could borrow that?" she said. My eyes took a second to focus on her kind expression. Dozens of honey-colored tendrils cradled her face, and her eyes looked longingly at the open book in my limp hand. It only took a second for me to realize what she was asking.

"Oh. Sure. I'm not really reading it anyway." I offered it up, and she took it.

"Thanks. I know this book is on one of my professor's 'Must Read' list, and I'm bored out of my mind anyway. Even though it didn't look like you were enjoying it too much, I figured it must be better than listening to Mr. Mouth-Breather next to me snore for the rest of the flight." I laughed. She talked a lot, and fast, but I liked it. She presented her hand and I grasped it in my own, "Hi, Alexandra, I'm Kat," she said. She must have recognized the bewilderment in my face, because she followed that quickly with, "I saw your class

ring," she gestured at the second finger of my right hand, where the ring I had worked an entire summer to buy now resided. "2005, eh? Are you going to college?"

"Well, it's Alex, and I am actually undecided. I took this vacation to kind of get a kind of taste of 'life on my own,' but it went horribly. I missed my mom, and, as it turns out, I hate all things French," I smiled goofily, and she laughed, "I guess I am just not rea—" I cut myself off. I suddenly remembered the dream I just had. I remembered the feeling of walking, independently into a new, and foreign place. I remembered how excited I felt, how secure.

Kat understood. She said, unbothered by sudden silence, "Yeah, I know what you mean. I was afraid to go away to school at first too. I think you just have to plunge into it, without looking back, ya know? In no time at all, you'll feel at home."

My mind wandered away from her and stumbled upon my senior psychology class. My slightly-hunched teacher, Mrs. Humphrey was talking about Freud and his theory on dreaming. "Freud believed that every dream was made up of two parts," she bellowed, "The manifest content is the obvious things that you would wake up and tell people about, and the latent content holds the true meaning of the dream. The latent content is most often disguised in the manifest

content, so it easily goes unnoticed. Have you ever wondered why your dreams seem so ridiculous sometimes? Well it's because their real meaning—based on your innermost thoughts and feelings—is hidden within all that silliness,” She went on to give us some sort of dream journal assignment, which I did, but hated. At the time, I was too busy scrambling to finish my math homework for the next class to give it too much thought, but, looking back, one could really get a lot from that theory. If I had told Kat about that dream of mine, it may have sounded to her like a crazy fairytale without any connections to my life. Freud, however, may have recognized it for what it was: an answer. My dream was the answer to a question I had been asking myself all summer: “Should I go away to college?”

When I walked off the plane that day, I had an unwavering confidence about the direction I was taking in my life. The immediate prospect of leaving home, and living on my own was no longer a dark, looming cloud at which I just kind of glanced sideways and ignored. It was the bright light of hope. It was both the end of a journey and the beginning of a lifetime. I would go on to college with my gaze fixed and my heart high, alone, and unafraid.

Second Place Short Story

VINEGAR AND OIL

VECSERNEYS

Hanna

A tale of quick thinking and come-uppance, this sparkling, short piece takes its movement from its title. The funny, vinegary-tongued narrator must learn some of the qualities of good oil in order to extricate herself from a social problem--ending with a fine balance of the two. - Erin McGraw

I've a talent for stifling my gag reflex and smiling at the same time. The store-bought chocolate cake, tasting of Crisco, powdered sugar, and darkened flour, wended its sticky way down my esophagus. Somehow I lost enough innate honesty to say, "This is delicious. Where did you get it?" Inwardly I decided that wherever she bought the nightmare of culinary art was going to get a miss from me.

Aunt Patty wasn't known for her Epicurean prowess but for being the rich aunt who'd drop two hundred bucks on gift cards or, if Providence was smiling, just hand over the cash. This birthday, I hadn't fared so well. I discreetly grimaced at the large box on the table. It wasn't cash or a gift card. Skillfully keeping up the conventional prattle, I unwrapped. "Wow, you're so good at wrapping, Aunt Pat. I always hate to mess up the package. I should to save this paper. It was so sweet of you to think of me!"

Although mercenary about birthday

gifts, I'm not malicious, so I tried to play the part of the appreciative niece. "Where on earth did you find this?" I cocked my head coquettishly and batted my eyelashes. They are long and black, and it had worked since I was little. I figured Christmas comes eventually.

"Do you like it?" My dear Aunt Patty looked at me expectantly.

The bottle looked like it contained leftovers from a drunken greengrocer's Halloween party. Little olives floated about in vinegar, reminding me of cow eyeballs I had seen preserved in formaldehyde. "Wow, this is really... cool. I love France." The large bottle was in the shape of the Eiffel Tower. I smiled through gritted teeth and quenched the urge to cosh her with it. So much for fat checks!

"I thought you said you took French." Aunt Patty beamed.

"Yeah, I started last fall. This is pretty cool." I somehow persuaded my

voice to sound enthusiastic in spite of my disappointment. And, I'm not ashamed to say I was rather impressed with how well I could fake the delighted child act.

"I thought this was so cute when I found it! You see the vinegar is infused with mountain-grown olives and garlic from Avignon!"

This revelation had the effect of bucking me up considerably. Mountain-grown olives—that's what I call sweet.

Aunt Patty went on with what I considered an excess of animation. "There is this really classy shoppe in downtown Philly where they have all this great imported cuisine and a petit tea room."

All "petit" tea rooms can burn to the ground in my opinion, as long as there are no casualties and the owners have insurance. You see, I'm actually quite generous most of the time.

I now thought ruefully of our conversation a few months previously, after Aunt Pat had returned from a tour of France. For once I had been genuine in my interest and had rhapsodized over the photos she brought home. This abomination, not the ticket to Paris I had hoped for, was the result of all my carefully dropped hints. I thought she would realize I deserved a vacation abroad.

For years I'd been Aunt Pat's little darling. I was sure the raving over her

"gourmet" dishes would bring home the bacon, and I never missed an opportunity to "pour on the old oil" in my grateful letters for the numerous gift cards I'd received through the years. My "deepest appreciation" was unleashed in torrents of eloquence after gathering up the current holiday's allotment of loot. This Eiffel Tower incident was regrettable. Where had I missed the mark?

I lugged the monstrosity home, giving no small amount of thought to how I could expunge this symbol of defeat from my record.

Inspiration prompted me to turn the offensive object into an opportunity for self-promotion. I am very pragmatic. Midterms were approaching and what better way to butter up my French teacher than to present her with this lovely objet d'art, namely, the vinegar junk.

Yeah, she liked it. She asked where I got it and said wasn't I a sweet young lady for thinking of her. One has to know how to play people at the right time.

As it turned out, she has the same generous spirit I have. My teacher gave it to her sister-in-law, who (dang, it's small world!) works with my aunt. You know what happened.

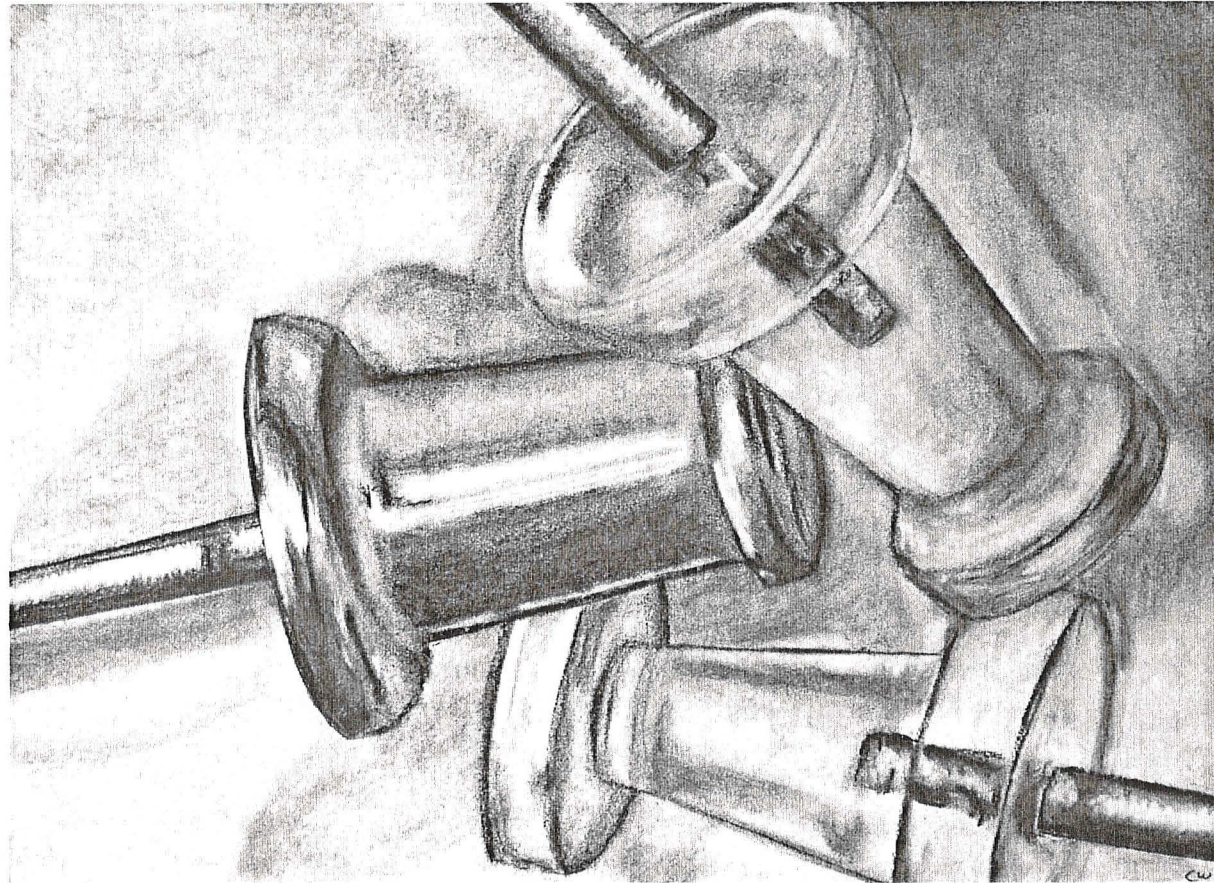
I told Aunt Patty, "You know, it's nice to find so many people with good taste like you have!"

Selection of Merit

THUMB TACKS

Carrie

WEST



Selection of Merit

P A I N T A R H Y T H M

Passion is surreal when observed,
By a vivid imagination.
Experiment with dreams,
To create art.
Approach life through fiery song,
To see a masterpiece.
Capture beauty like colors,
And feel harmony.
Sculpt every movement,
In balanced grace.

Dayline

V A N C A M P - L O Y

Selection of Merit

NO ESCAPE

PALMATEER

Tara Christine

The fluttering of my eyelids subsides for a second to allow the intense sunlight through. The opening of my eyes was more than a struggle; this meant that an outcast once again was not spared by the hands of God and was sent to face hell. Hell comes in many forms, attacking my morality, identity, and the very nature of my soul. This particular attack on me was placed on my skin with numbers. I no longer have a name but numbers to let the man with the mustache know who I am. This man's power has been shoved down my throat by blond haired, blue eyed men and women. The coldness of their eyes proves the hatred and disgust they have for my people. The thought of my family and friends humiliated and punished for who they are makes the panic and fear pump through my veins violently. Trapped in these stables where rats and infestation grow wild, my thoughts wander to the beginning and where I went wrong.

"Pack all of your things now," was what my mother yelled to me as the soldiers came house-to-house, picking up the neighborhood Jews. The anxiety and terror in my mother's voice was outweighed by my father, telling her

that Hitler just wants to keep track of us, and the discussion was ended. My father, being a man of small stature, always believed that kindness was in the depths of even the most ruthless man. Owner of the neighborhood hardware store, I was still amazed that he kept those same views, even through the robbing and stealing. My thoughts went back to packing up my one suitcase when my gut made the noise of a howling dog. Glancing at the clock, I realized that it was lunchtime and I was not going to get any lunch till later. Being well fed was one of my mother's most strict of rules; she always said, "I will not have a child go hungry just because they want to play." Considering packing was not on my list of pastimes, the idea of a moist sandwich passes through my mind. Trying to think on an empty stomach was definitely hard, but if it had to be done I was going to pack my most prized possession. First was my blanket that my grandmother made which was a special reminder of her powdered scent and the sweet taste of sugar that she always had on her lips. The second was a stuffed animal called Lucy; only as big as my head, this ragged old doll was the sidekick of all my most daring

adventures. My suitcase had room for one last thing; this thing could have been another toy, and maybe a necklace, but what popped in my mind was my sundress that I wore to my brother's Bar Mitzvah. This dress was not a traditional Bar-Mitzvah dress, but through begging and chores around the house I was allowed to wear it. With my bag finished and my mother shouting my name, I rushed down our stairs excited to see our new house.

The dust and grime filled my nostrils, leaving a lasting sent in my mind. The first sight of our new neighborhood that I saw was the image of unattended roads and what looked to be the remains of bodily fluid and left over garbage. This was not like my old house but was like the houses that my father said to be owned by the poverty-stricken people. The question arose in my mind and was instantly shut down with the noise of a gunshot. This gun that made that horrible blast was in the hands of a soldier. The green uniform was brand new and looked like you could have seen your reflection in its buttons. With that thought a smile appeared on my face; this was definitely not the proper thing and was noticed. Being only a child, noticing details was my knack and it seemed to me that the green uniformed man just walked by and never took any consideration of my action. Soldiers were supposed to be tough and didn't tolerate anything, so why was I being passed

up? This unwelcome disregard should have been a warning sign to all but was shrugged off by my father with his famous wink. The brown eye of my father twinkled at me and was the reassurance that I was searching for.

Settling into our new house was a struggle that I had never faced before. This first off was no house but apartments that had two families living in it. The walls were not painted or decorated like my mother would have had it; they only had the gray color that seemed to be creeping over everyone's face. These apartments were not taken care of and appeared to be owned by no one. This concept to me was just not realistic, to have an owner that didn't care about his tenants and leave his building in a filthy rubble. There was no furniture and no defined rooms. The apartment was one room, leaving me with no room for myself, and sleeping with total strangers. This unsettling thought was also shown on the faces of my family. The first couple of days my mother had discussed with my father our escape, but my father pasted up her plans, not knowing that this could have saved his own family's lives.

The adventures of my childhood were not stopped by this new living arrangement but almost provoked. Since no one in the ghettos had jobs to my knowledge, this became a place of minimal supervision. Walking through the street was a pastime of

mine, seeing all of my friends and acting like a spy for the Americans. In my adventures I would sneak around, following the soldier and trying to understand what they were saying. Since my parents never taught my family German, this language was almost foreign to us. The only word that I knew when I arrived at this place was "stop or I will shoot". Having been here for a considerable amount of time, I was now able to pick out words I knew from their conversations, decoding them and understanding that something bad was happening. The soldiers were discussing children and some place that they described as the end to all our worries. I left the soldiers and ran down the alley to the main street; I noticed that everything was quiet. The usual sounds of anger, fear, and sadness were almost smothered by the nothingness of silence. A threatening pull to my subconscious awakened me from my thoughts I and told me to get home. Walking through the street dodging the feces and food scraps, I hadn't realized that I was being followed. The feeling of anxiety was minimal as I sped up my paces, making a straight path to my house. Looking around I saw the children being ripped from their apartments, like a petal being ripped from its stem. How could I have missed the screams of the youth that echo so loudly now? The thought of leaving my family terrified me. Leaving

the warm arms of my father and the gentle touches of my mother felt like my emotions from my own heart were being scraped out, and no comforting could stop this. Being still three blocks away, the thudding of my heart began to ring in my ears; the noise became so loud that every thought that I had two seconds ago was now replaced by my fears of my fate. Listening to my parents was never a thought of mine, but now the lessons that they tried so hard to teach me seemed to be the least of my worries.

The adventures and games that I loved to have with Lucy are no more. The only thing that brings a smile to my face is remembering the once beautiful sundress that shined in my father's eyes. The dress at the present time is not yellow any more, but a mixture of blood and dirt that was also painted all over my skin. Clean was a thought of the past for me, and surviving in this wasteland was now reality. The reality of my situation is obvious and is plastered on every child's face in here. The soldier stalked around us picking from the children, like you would pick out the top kitten from the litter. They always picked the strong ones and never returned them back to their stable. Every morning I open my eyes and hope to God that I am away from this torturous place and in a place where the fresh smells of food are pushed through my nostrils and the clean colored white paint is splashed

through out my old bedroom. To be with my family is a thought of the past and the actuality of ever seeing them has sunken into my mind now. To prove I am strong to the soldiers would just get me killed, so I have acted like the rats and hopefully have not been seen by the slaughterers that are walking by my stable. They walk by with their cruel eyes and pass me up like the soldier did at the ghettos, he must think I am not worth their time.

To be picked out of the crowd was a reward back home, but here this is a punishment beyond any one's existence. The starvation that is portrayed by protruding ribs, black encircled eyes, and empty cries are a painful reminder of what is to come. Today is a special day for my barn; this involves being inspected by the soldiers, getting sprayed by a hose, and get what little food they provide us. The first on the list is the inspection. The soldiers take our clothes, off snickering and laughing at us then they use their clean hands to wander over our filthy bodies. When this happens my mind generally wanders to question that I wish I could ask them. One would be do you do this to the boys or to the dads; I know my dad would never allow this. Some girls get taken to the door that is painted red and some girls get taken to the door that is painted black. Both colors are unsettling to me, but I have been to the black room. This room is where the men make you do favors for

them, and promise you that if you are good you will not die. All promises at this dark place are empty. The red room is for the girls that don't pass inspection; they never return back to the stables. The next thing on your list today is get sprayed with water, I think it is supposed to be a shower of some sort. The water is ice cold and so are the men's eyes as they snicker at us. Once again the girls have to strip and we run around the courtyard like a chicken with its head cut off. One day they had guns and as we ran they shot at your feet; the ones that got hit went to this big cylinder-looking object. This big green metal thing has a chimney at the south end of it, and there is a man that sits on the top of this building eating some kind of food every time we get released from our cages. Even from about fifty yards away I can see the food is a sandwich that looks full of meat. You never realize that the great meals that your mother makes could be our last supper. After the ice-cold water on your skin is done, we go to eat the feast of the day. This food looks like some kind of porridge and is the least appetizing thing I have ever had. The girls have to eat in silence and the only thing we can do is look around at this vast killing grounds.

Eating my food I begin to think of my father and his bright brown eyes. His eyes always kept me happy and reassured me that everything was going to be all right. I miss

his eyes and miss the strong arms that were another way to comfort me. The comforting was no more and there were no loving eyes here. I choke on my food and my thoughts of the past are ended. By the south side of the camp, by the green building there is a bus unloading. This is a bad sign because when the buses unload that means that more room needs to be made, which means more girls need to be killed. As the bus unloads I realize that they are all grown men and they are being led like dogs to the green building. If I was to get up and see if my dad was in the crowd, I would most likely get shot, but if my dad was in the crowd I could die happy. I made my mind up I was going to get up the courage and be the strong one that always gets taken away. This was my time to stand up; I have faced the facts that I am going to die with the other sea of already marked dead girls. It is sad to think that the girl that you just look at two seconds ago could be lying on the ground a second later with a bullet in her head, but she would be in peace and I would not. I stand up like I am going to throw my trash away, as I make my first step toward what could be my dad, or what could be my ending, a girl shoots up running like an animal toward the men. The dreams that could have ended this all are crushed under the dirt that the girl runs so swiftly on. Was she thinking what I was thinking this whole time? What right does

she have taking my one chance to be happy?

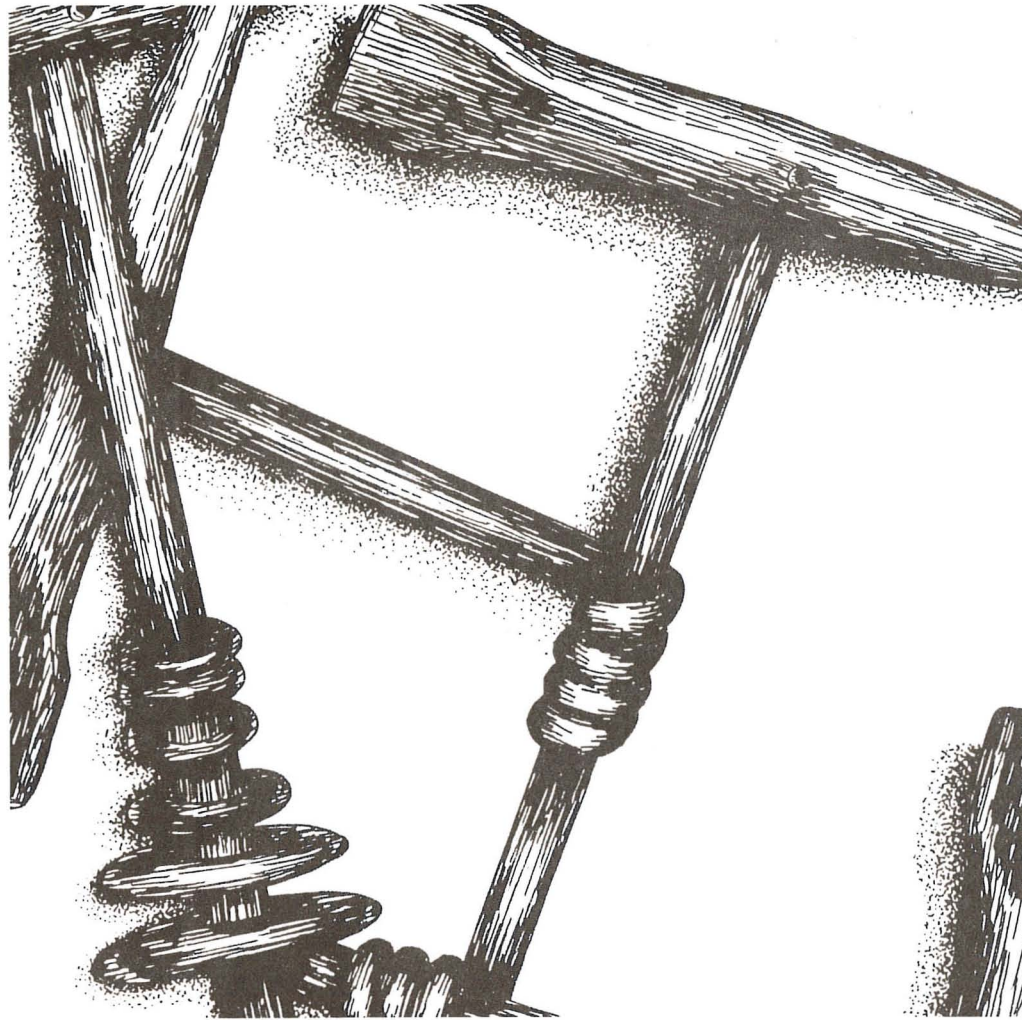
About twenty minutes later the girls and me are taken to the green building. As we walk the trail that has been imbedded in the ground there lies that one brave dead girl. It seemed like the soldiers had a field day with her. They acted like she was some wild game and all the soldiers stood up and at the same time began to shoot. Now the only thing that resembles the girl is her once curly hair. The hair that once lay upon her head seems to be connected to nothing in particular. I could just imagine that her hair could be used for a decently warm blanket. Morbid as it is life is life and death is death, really there is nothing in between. Walking past the girl many of the soldiers laugh and point the guns at us. The trail of girls finally reaches the back of the building to see bodies piled upon bodies. The newly killed men have not reached the stench that the other hundreds of bodies in the dark hole have. Cries have been uttered from many girls round me and the only thing that has reached me is the horrible smell. The flies buzz around my head, and in their flight they seem to know what is dead and what is not. They don't land on my skin but land on the one arm in the heaping pile of many arms. One tear has fallen from my face, this tear doesn't cry for the dead people or the crying girls. This one tear is crying for the brown eyes that I see before me in the mound. These

eyes have lost the sparkle and brightness that they once held. The laughter that once seeped from the pink, smooth mouth is now silence and a pasty purple appearance. This tear symbolizes my future and the knowledge that has now reached my mind; there is no escape.

Selection of Merit

CHIPPING HAMMERS

Noelle
TATRO



Selection of Merit

THE BEACH

There's a road I often travel, a road where I can sometimes feel the chill of excitement that I once felt as a child, when we used to pack up the shiny, turquoise T-Bird and head to the sandy shores of a little piece of paradise we called Grandma's house. It was a very special treat for our family to visit this place; it was a place I used to think of as an enchanted land. Unfortunately, we were only able to visit once a summer because our large dairy farm was normally too busy to be left unoccupied for very long. But for one glorious day, once a year, dad would sacrifice a hard day's work and drive us to grandma's beach. This was our time to relax and have some memorable fun. To me, this was the ultimate day, the day that I longed for, dreamed endlessly about, and anticipated patiently from one year to the next, the one day of complete fun and fantasy away from the hard work of the farm. If I close my eyes, just for a few moments, I can experience that memorable day all over again.

The trunk was crammed with giant inner tubes, sand pails, shovels, blankets, and beach towels. A pleasant aroma escaped the wicker basket that occupied my mother's lap. The basket was filled with smoked ham, fresh

vegetables, melons, and homemade donuts. My older sister was giddy, as she played with baby Cat (Cathy) in the back seat, making her laugh. My brother shoved me to the middle of the back seat, leaving me squeezed like a sandwich. As my brother boarded, he tucked a fistful of fishing rods under his leg and mumbled something about "the big one." He clumsily placed his feet on top of a green, rusty tackle box, as he guarded his bowl of slimy worms between his ankles. The anticipation of the day welled up inside us all. We were excited and could hardly sit still, thinking about what was to come.

With the white-top down, the sun spilling its beautiful morning colors of yellow, orange, pink, and purple, we set off in the sparkly T-Bird. As the warm wind whipped and whirled in our hair, the motor peacefully hummed as we drove what seemed like an endless highway. I can remember laying my head back on the leather seat and looking up at the morning sky, and I wondered how far this enormous, blue canopy sky could reach. This canopy was the same never-ending blue sky that I saw across the fields of our farm.

Mother distributed wrapped pieces of

Louise

FLANNIGAN

striped chewing gum over her shoulder, and dad joked around making funny faces that made us all laugh. I sat backwards in my seat to look at the wide-open view of the world rushing behind us. I watched as the road stretched longer and longer, and the white lines began to look like rubber bands stretching as far as the eye could see. I anxiously waited for the firey-red blinkers to begin to glow from the pointed tail lights. The turn signal indicated we were almost there, and I'd soon be hearing the sound of the crashing waves crashing onto the shore.

When the car stopped, I quickly jumped out the side of the fin-tailed car, while my brother detangled himself from the mixed-up fishing rods. I ran down the hill along the long, unkept, weedy path; the path I knew would lead me to the enchanted land of giant sandcastles and drawbridges. I felt the weeds under my bare feet slowly turning to sand. The sand became thicker and harder to run on, as I ran faster and faster down the path. I felt the pounding in my chest, and at the same time I heard the pounding and thrashing of the giant waves. As I ran faster and faster, I could hear the waves become louder and louder, until I reached the end of the narrow path.

There was an old, rickety gate that blocked my entrance to the unique playground that I knew was there. As I thrust the crooked gate open, the magnificent horizon of sand,

water, and sky came into view. There it was, in all its glory: the beach! My long anticipated arrival was now a reality. I stopped, looked, and listened. Slowly I took a deep breath, and my head felt fuzzy. A chill crept up my spine, making me scrunch my shoulders into my neck. My eyes scanned the breathtaking, picture-perfect canvas before me. I could feel the magical essence surround me, as I walked through the gate onto the beach. Oh, yes! It was the same picture I had preserved in my mind for so long.

The rocks were still, as the waves slithered and tumbled over them, and the seagulls were singing their usual song. The shells along the wrinkled shoreline were pushed into crumbled piles, waiting for their placement in the castles, yet to be built. I could smell the faint odor of lingering fish and seaside air, as the wind mingled them together. The sun had already heated the gritty sand beneath my toes, and the wildflowers were scattered along the wooden planks that lead to grandma's tattered porch. I could see grandma's white linens billowing gently in the warm, summer breeze. I began to walk carefree along the water's rippling edge, my footprints trailing behind, and my toes squishing in the wet sand. I could tell it was going to be another fun-filled day at the beach, just like before.

Our day, indeed, was filled with many magical moments. My brother was persistent in his efforts to fish from the slippery rocks.

When he took a break from fishing, he would stand on the large boulders and dive through his floating inner tube and pretended to be Shamoo the whale. My sister roasted like a lobster on her big beach towel in the sun, stopping only to take an occasional dip in the cool water. Mom played with baby Cat on the beach, building sand castles as high as they could reach, and dug moats around them for Cat to fill with water. Cat diligently carried splashing buckets of dripping water back and forth from the wet shoreline to their destinations.

Dad and I played the monster game in the water, the one he knew I loved so much. He hoisted me onto his back, growling and shaking violently, as I tried desperately to hold on and not fall into the cold, but inviting water. Then dad let me ride on his back like a whale, as he swam over the jagged rocks that led us to the giant sandbar that spread unevenly across deep, sparkling water.

When our skin was shriveled like prunes, we'd all sit together basking in the warm sun, taking turns decorating the castles with treasures we'd collected throughout the day. We gathered green and brown seaweed, shells of all shapes and sizes, seagull feathers, dulled beach glass, unique rocks, and several lengths of sticks; I thought these were the grandest treasures. We used smooth pieces of washed ashore wood to scratch lines and zigzags around the castle's outer walls. We

used the same pieces of wood, some crooked, to write and draw pictures on the giant chalkboard of sand. We filled the beach with our exquisite artwork. Then I watched our artwork magically disappear along the edge of the water as the hungry waves slurped up our designs and sucked them out to sea.

When the sun began to descend across the western sky, I knew our special day was drawing to an end. Grandma would come down the wooden walkway, waving her apron high above her silvery hair, announcing that dinner was ready. We gathered on the old, wooden porch that overlooked the majestic view, and we enjoyed a family picnic. We ate, laughed, and cracked jokes, and for one day my life seemed perfect.

I dreaded hearing the same words that I had heard so often before. Once again, like clockwork, the words I loathed were ringing in my ears. As only my father could say, "It's chore time! Let's pack it all up and head back home." In slow motion I gathered my belongings; I wished this day would never end. I slowly walked backwards up the sandy path, carrying my collected treasures to take home, leaving the gate open behind me. My mind was trying desperately to store the shrinking view that I was about to leave behind. The sandcastles in the distance were surrounded by hungry seagulls, as they ate the salty chips I had left for them in the secret tower. The waves were calmer now, as

if they were sadly waving goodbye to me. I disappeared up the hill and into the back seat of the T-Bird.

The ride back to reality was quiet and saddening. I knew it would be another year before we could return to the little piece of paradise that I loved so much. Everybody sat speechless in the car, as the cool evening breeze cast a chill in the air around us. The sun was sinking lower behind its evening blanket of colors. I wished we could stay at the beach forever, but the farm was waiting patiently for our return.

My family never returned to Grandma's beach after she passed away, and for a long time it was rarely talked about, almost forgotten. I've had a strong urge to return to that beach, the one I believed to be enchanted. I'd love to be able to feel the same magical essence that I did as a child. I have found myself traveling that old, familiar road, more so lately, trying to recapture the memories of the special times my family and I enjoyed at Grandma's beach. Sometimes I'll drive by very slowly, trying to catch a glimpse over the hill of the weedy path, now occupied by strangers. I pray that I will never forget about the few precious hours we spent as a family on that beach. Now my own mother has passed away, and our family will never feel that same wholeness again. These memories are my treasures I keep close in my heart. I feel the contentment of knowing my

memories are still preserved and the sadness of the days gone forever. They were the best times I can ever recall, and if I close my eyes, just for a few moments, I can still remember them.

Selection of Merit

MASS DRAWN EYES OF DEER

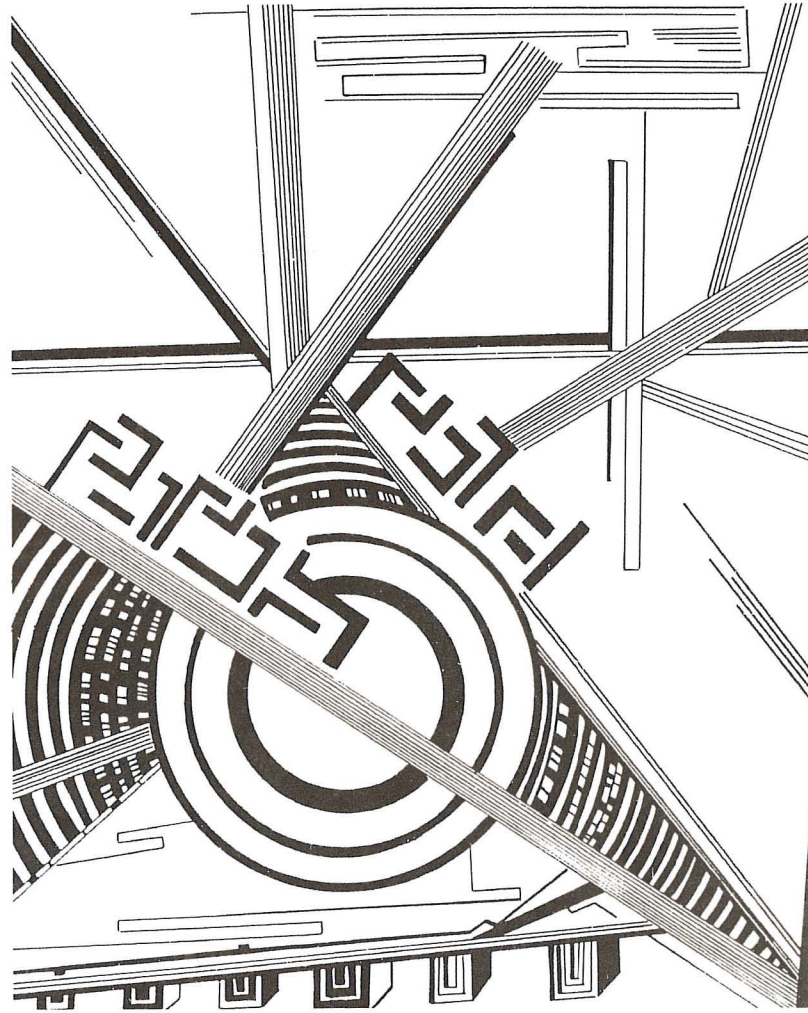


David
MEDRANO

Selection of Merit

GEOMETRIC INTERPRETATION
OF A DEER HEAD

David
MEDRANO



Selection of Merit

CHOCOLATE FRUSTRATION



Carrie
WEST

Richard G. Colwell

SHORT STORY AWARD

UNTITLED

The Colwell Award is given each year to the work of fiction which distinguishes itself in terms of creativity and artistic innovation. "This powerful story is ambitious in its reach and its execution. Setting out to explore the effect of disappointment on a girl, it ends with a rich portrait of loss and sorrow, and the everyday courage that can shape a life. The author's fine control of tone carries us through many different emotions with wit, clarity, and ultimately complicated understanding." —Erin McGraw

Jessica

MENEGHIN

Few things are better than spending a beautiful August afternoon sprawled out by the pool, soaking up the last bits of the fleeing summer sun. With a perspiring lemonade by my side and Cosmo's latest in my hands, it's quite possible that I was enjoying the perfect summer's day. I was just thinking of abandoning my baking for a dip in the pool when the doorbell rang. Just in case it was a boy, I thought I had better hold off on swimming—it does deadly things to my hair. A few minutes went by before I heard my mom's heavy footsteps coming across the deck, "Jess, there's someone at the door for you."

"Who?" I asked.

"Your grandmother," she replied in a grave tone.

"You mean...the grandmother I haven't seen, spoken with, or heard from in oh...about nine years, or so?" I said, feigning aloofness.

"That's the one." That's just great, I thought

to myself. I never even spoke to my biological father, what on Earth could his mother want?

"What does she want?"

"I'm not sure. I think you should talk to her."

My mother's kind face and sympathetic eyes backed her up.

"Fine," I said, and moved out of my chair, wincing as my skin peeled away from the sticky plastic.

I stepped into the chilly house and made my way toward the front door. For some reason, I felt like I needed to impress this grandmother person. I hated myself for it, but I wiped my running eyeliner and ran my fingers through my hair a couple of times. As I marched around the corner into the foyer, I saw her, and an polite smile stretched across my face. Why am I smiling at this woman? I asked myself in anger. She looked at me warmly, and her eyes invited me to come closer. I pushed open the door and instantly felt vulnerable. I wished there was still a barrier between us. Without

a moment's hesitation, she pulled me into an amiable hug, and all I could think was that she smelled like old, dusty carpet.

"How are you?" she asked, without pulling away.

"Fine," I said, trying to sound nice. To my relief, she let go. She moved her hands from around my middle to my shoulders and put me an arms length away from her. She looked at me for a moment before she spoke,

"I have something to tell you, Jessica," And just like that, the mood of our little meeting changed for the worse.

"Okay," I said, lacking a better response.

"Honey," she paused, "Your father is dying."

What did she just say? Wow, that came out of nowhere...what should I say? What should I say...what should I say...it was like someone found the volume knob on my brain and cranked it to "Loud".

"He might not live through the night," is what I think the words trying to break through to me sounded like.

Is she still talking? Great...what am I supposed to do? How should I react? What is my expression like right now? Oh I hope it isn't a stupid smile, or anything....I tried my best to look thoughtfully concerned, but I had lost all control of my face.

Time, after that moment, became a blur of faded colors and indistinctive sounds. There were hugs without faces and sympathy from

unknown origins.

Reality tightened around me again during the car ride to the hospital, to which I agreed, even though I wasn't sure I was ready. The grandmother kept trying to make small talk. She was asking me seemingly insignificant things about school and friends and boy-friends. I smiled, and replied genially, but inside I was screaming so loud, I thought my lungs would surely storm through my chest, declaring war against her. Don't you dare talk to me like you know me, my head screamed at her. Don't treat me like your cute, little granddaughter with whom you've made it a point to visit every holiday and remember her birthdays for the past nine years! And, most prominent in my memory, my thoughts wailed, How can you just sit there and try to forget that your son is dying? I barely know the man, and I'm more afflicted than it seems you could even understand! I was disgusted. Here I was, consumed by the cataclysm at hand, and she wanted to be my friend? I wasn't having it.

Relief. Alleviation. Refreshment. Release. The car ride was finally at an end when we reached the gloomy hospital parking lot. I stepped out of the car with what was probably too much haste. The grandmother's sad eyes took in my own before I quickly averted them to a Snicker's wrapper on the dirty concrete. I turned toward the massive building, but didn't dare to look up. I suppose I was

afraid of facing what was about to happen. Although I had been in the hospital many times, it was different this time; bigger... emptier. The trip up to ICU seemed to take hours. I can only remember seeing two other people the whole way: a father and daughter. The girl must have been about three, and her dad was holding her up to the gift shop window so she could admire a stuffed bear in a white nurse's uniform. She pointed to it as her face lit up with desire, and he smiled warmly at her. Tears slowly began to build for the first time. I choked them back, and, again, rested my eyes on the floor, where it was safe.

When we reached the floor, my heart started to pound. I was filled with a terrified excitement that must have been bursting out of my face, because the grandmother started with her condolence again. She took my shaking hand in hers as we crossed the threshold. I wished she wouldn't do that. At that point, I had never felt so young. Instantly, I was reverted back to a six-year-old girl who was about to see her daddy. For the moment, I felt as if no time has passed—as if I actually knew the man I was about to see.

This is where reality loosens its grip again. A few details come back to me, but I have forgotten the bulk of our meeting. Perhaps I have blocked it out? I am not sure. I remember being very conscious of my appearance—patting down my hair every few seconds, tugging

at my wrinkled t-shirt, and smoothing my shorts. What did we talk about? I'll never be sure. I like to tell myself that we caught up on the past nine years of each other's lives. This version of the story is complete with jokes and smiles, sunshine and happy background music. I also like to tell myself that I saw him as an incredibly healthy-looking man who had clearly been sober for years. I love to tell myself these things, and they really do help, but if I wander long enough in my memory, I know that I will find a cold meeting with an alcoholic who didn't clean up until it was way too late. I know that I will eventually trip on two distant people who are inwardly remorseful of their lost time but aren't sure what to do about it, and so do nothing.

My father died that night of complications related to severe alcoholism. I didn't sleep when I got home, but I still went to school in the morning. I suppose I felt that being among friends might help. I was wrong. The once-so-familiar halls of my high school now seemed foreign and gray to me. Every face looked the same. Not one person's eyes reached into me and saw that my insides were a tragic mess. Perhaps I didn't show it, because not even my friends noticed anything off about me that day. They walked and talked just like they always did: as if someone had hammered a pin into their backs and wound them up. I wished they would shut up. Should I tell them? I asked myself. I would have jug-

gled the idea longer, but their cattiness lead me to just blurt out, "My dad died last night, you guys," on our way to lunch. There was a silence. I'm sure it was more uncomfortable for them than me, but I didn't care. After they recovered from the unfair blow I shot at them, they became weepy and insisted on talking about how I felt—about how I was dealing. They were suffocating me. I needed to escape. I choked out something about having to use the bathroom, and when I refused their company, their caring expressions followed my back through the bathroom door. I scuttled into the last stall and quickly closed and locked the flimsy door. I melted onto the floor and dropped my face into my hands. Let them help you, Jessica. They want to, you need them to. You have to talk to someone. My thoughts encouraged me to come out of that bathroom stall for the better part of lunch, but my heart wasn't allowing it. I wanted to be alone. Even when my friends knocked and spoke softly through the crack, I just told them I felt sick and convinced them I'd be fine alone. I went home early that day. On the way home, my mom was quiet. She didn't speak to me until we stopped in our driveway and she silenced the humming engine.

"You're going to be fine," she said to me, confidently, but without sympathy. That was it. That was what I needed to hear. Not because it had any kind of revolutionary healing effect, but because it was so outrageous

to me, that it allowed me to let go of a lot of what I was feeling. The first lonely tears rolled down my face.

"Really, Mom? How am I going to be fine?" I began crying freely, screaming and crying, and it felt more relieving than I can explain. "I never got to know him, Mom! He probably thought I hated him! I couldn't think of anything to say to him...you don't know what it's like to lose your father, Mom. You have no idea. It's like....this hole that's always going to be here, now. This gaping hole that can't be filled by anything...ever. I always thought there'd be time...and now there's not. You don't know what I'm going through, and you have no right to sit there and tell me I'll be fine, so don't!"

She wiped my tear-stained cheek, lifted my chin so that my watery gaze met hers, and pulled my head to her chest. I sobbed there for I-don't-know-how-long.

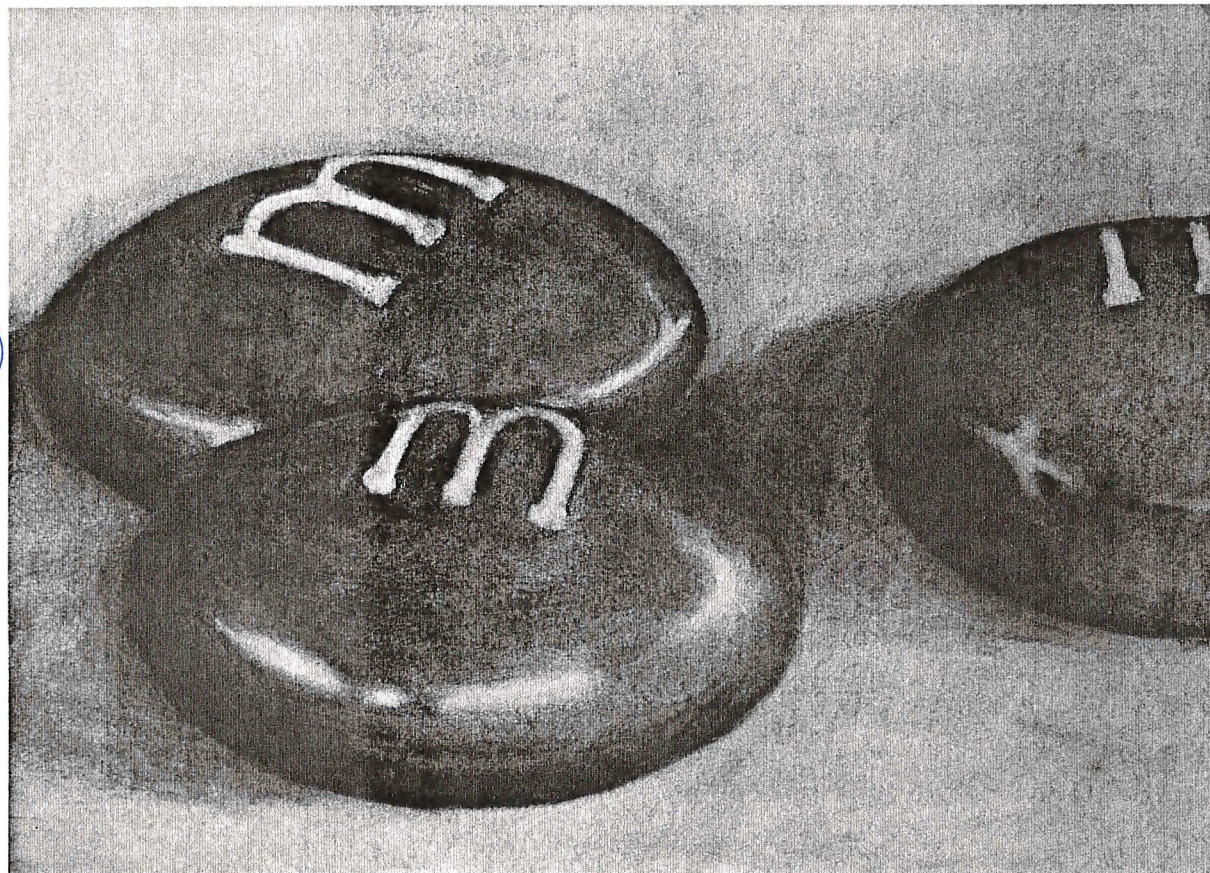
I desperately wish that I could type out a story where my mom showed up in a glowing cape, armed with nothing but the powers of intuition and kindness and, somehow, brought with her the instant, magical resolution to my father's death. I am begging my fingers to dance out these words, but it just isn't true. Part of me left this world with my dad, and it still hurts... just as I'm sure it always will. Even though I can barely remember our time together, I know I will never forget him.

Selection of Merit

MELTS IN YOUR MOUTH

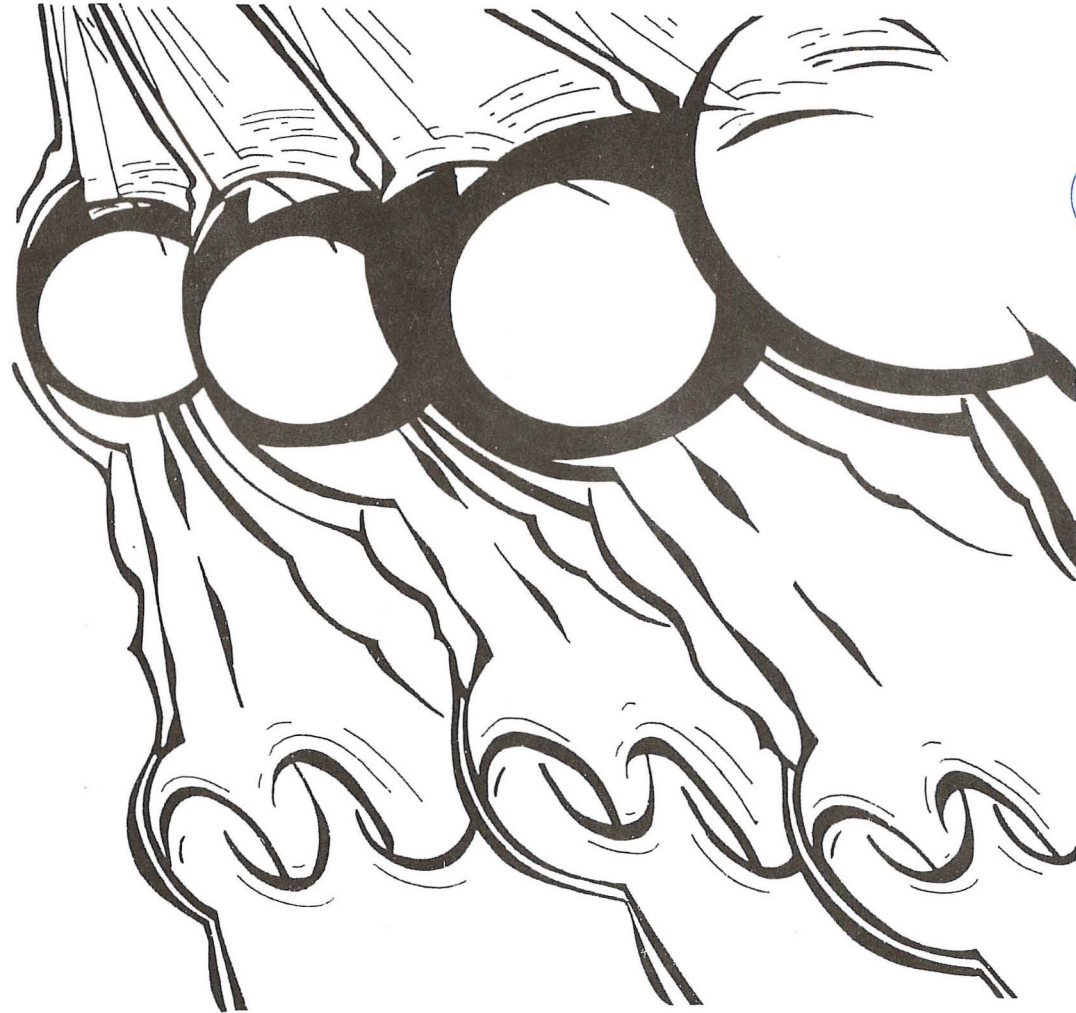
NOLAN

Kyle



Selection of Merit

BIO - JOINT



Stephanie

MCGINNIS

Selection of Merit

BARBIE CHRONICLES

Heather

BLAKE

Whew! It's stuffy in here! The air conditioning must be broken here at Target. The plastic walls on my box are starting to fog up. The flu vaccine shortage doesn't affect me because I've been breathing my own air for decades. Oops! I must have had a few too many bean burritos last night for dinner—maybe that's causing my plastic window to fog. If only I could break out of here... and grab some Kleenex located across the aisle from me.

Once again, I am able to see my picture-perfect smile reflecting back through my velum walls. Looking at my reflection, I have come to realize that my lips don't move, and I don't have individualized teeth. Nope... just a dazzling white smile with beautifully painted on lips that last for decades. I feel like a ventriloquist.

It gets tiring standing up 24/7 in a fixed stiletto pose—even when I wear gym shoes. I would really like to be “gellin” in some Dr. Scholl's here to pamper these bunions. Then there's my hair and make-up. What can I say? I'm drop-dead gorgeous, maybe a little self-centered, but nevertheless, drop-dead gorgeous. My coiffeur is perfectly in-tune

with the emerging fashion styles, and my hair color is flawless. I never have to worry about roots, greys, or frizz. I'm not bothered by itchy scalp or flaking dandruff. Do I even have a scalp? My face epitomizes perfection. My high plastic cheekbone structure, button nose, and bright eyes are the envy of all women of Vogue. My complexion is taught and smooth, wrinkle and blemish free even after 40+ years. No worries here about collagen loss, sagging, or Botox. I wonder what it feels like to blink?

As you can tell, I like to talk a lot (without moving my lips), and I really wish I could convey my message with hand and arm expressions. Oh, wait a minute! My arms are hinged at the shoulder and elbow. I can only move my arms forward and backward. Oh what I wouldn't give to dance the Macerana just once. I guess one benefit of life in plastic is never having to buy a Schick or replacement blades. For the rare mold of 1959's sake! My digits don't even move! I guess that rules out “colorful” language gestures. Mattel is silencing the dolls!

My breasts have been the target of much unjust criticism in recent years; as a

result, my clothes fit much more loosely now. I was attacked by religious, minority, and feminist groups stating my measurements were unrealistic and anatomically incorrect. Jealous bastards. My “over-the-shoulder-double-boulder-holder” now houses a deflated cup size, and my waist has ballooned and been replaced with a rubbery concoction. I still have no navel. As for my region below the equator, these painted on panties just don’t keep the draft out when it gets breezy at night when that Target night watchman turns down the heat.

Let’s talk fashion. My extensive wardrobe dresses me in everything from school teacher to astronaut, sequined bride to rock star. I am a vision no matter what the profession. Come to think of it, I seem to job hop frequently, and I always seem to have enough qualifications no matter what the profession requires. Dumb blonde... I think not. I am black listed as a negative stereotype, but in plastic reality I am a multi-tasking wonder! I can be Suzy Homemaker, Commander-In-Chief, and a girl’s best friend all in one afternoon. I consider myself a positive role model considering my career choices, my physical fitness, and my 43 year long-term monogamous relationship with Ken.

Speaking of Ken, 2004 was a rough year for break-ups. As you probably know,

we broke up just two days before Valentine’s Day. For crying out loud! It’s not all my fault. Sure, I share some of the blame, but after four decades you’d think he’d be man enough to give me a ring— and I don’t mean on the phone. I’m sick of being just a plastic plaything. Goodbye Ken, hello Blaine.

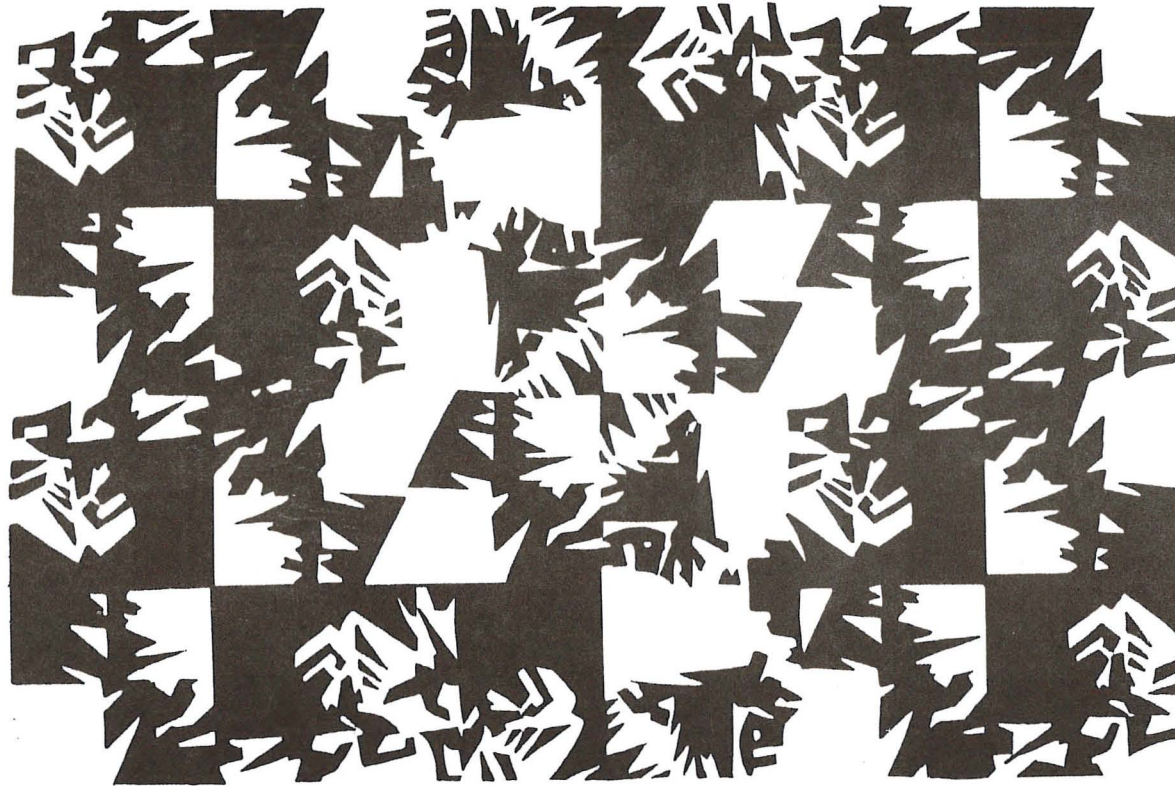
It will be dark soon. Tonight is pajama party night on aisle three, and time to catch up with old friends. The night watchman is turning off the lights. Finally, no one is looking and I can get my pajamas on, but it’s still breezy down there! Tonight we’ve invited Barbie, Barbie, and Barbie. Looks like no matter what the conversation, I will be talking to myself. We’re all looking forward to getting together to think outside the box!

Selection of Merit

NEEDLE DEEP

Stephanie

MCGINNIS



Selection of Merit

PILLAR OF PINS



David

MEDRANO

Selection of Merit

CONSTELLATIONS

Andrew

BUSH

leaves fall like rain as the morning rushes

by;

shadows grow long and lazy as

the sun draws heavy in its buoyant

broadcast.

it begins to set beyond the far limits of my

eyes,

but still seems so reachable.

she dances elegantly through the depleting

hours of day,

and straight into the stars.

her hair shimmers and spills in waves of silk

as the night presses on its surface.

beneath the lamps that line the street's lane,

her silhouette appears, then reappears,

with each new cone of yellow.

drunken moths aim to mimic her measure,

but their grace is lacking.

stars,

scattered in no particular pattern,

stress their pin points of toneless light

as they jacket the cosmic sky above.

their cold blaze beckons brightly within her

eyes.

this must be love – I can feel it in my toes.

I find myself fearing to fall asleep – for this

is my finest hour.

the moon's light seeps in and out of the

thinning tree branches –

playing stripes across her face.

I count them with innocent fingers –

thirteen, how unlucky ...

the New Year's air spells out her words as

she makes known

how amazingly alive alone can actually feel.

her indifference comes sudden, and without
warning.

she is cold.

her callous tone squeezes around me

like the intolerant fingers of a noose

narrowing on a spineless neck.

Selection of Merit

P I N K R O S E S

Jenna V.

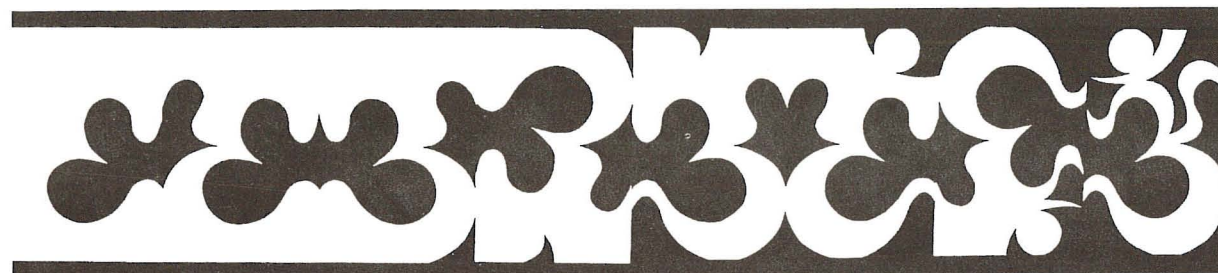
G R A Y

I know
That I said
Pink Roses
Were my Favorite.
But really,
When you think about it,
Passionate colors
Bleed away
So Rapidly.
And Petals fall
Like our Emotions,
Leaving the Rose
With naught but a stalk
And the Memory
Of the way it Was.
Give me a

Daisy,
Not quite White
So never Perfect.
Beautiful,
But not as noticeable
Next to the Vibrant Rose
But still Standing
Long After
The Pink Roses
Have Gone.

Selection of Merit

OCTET #1



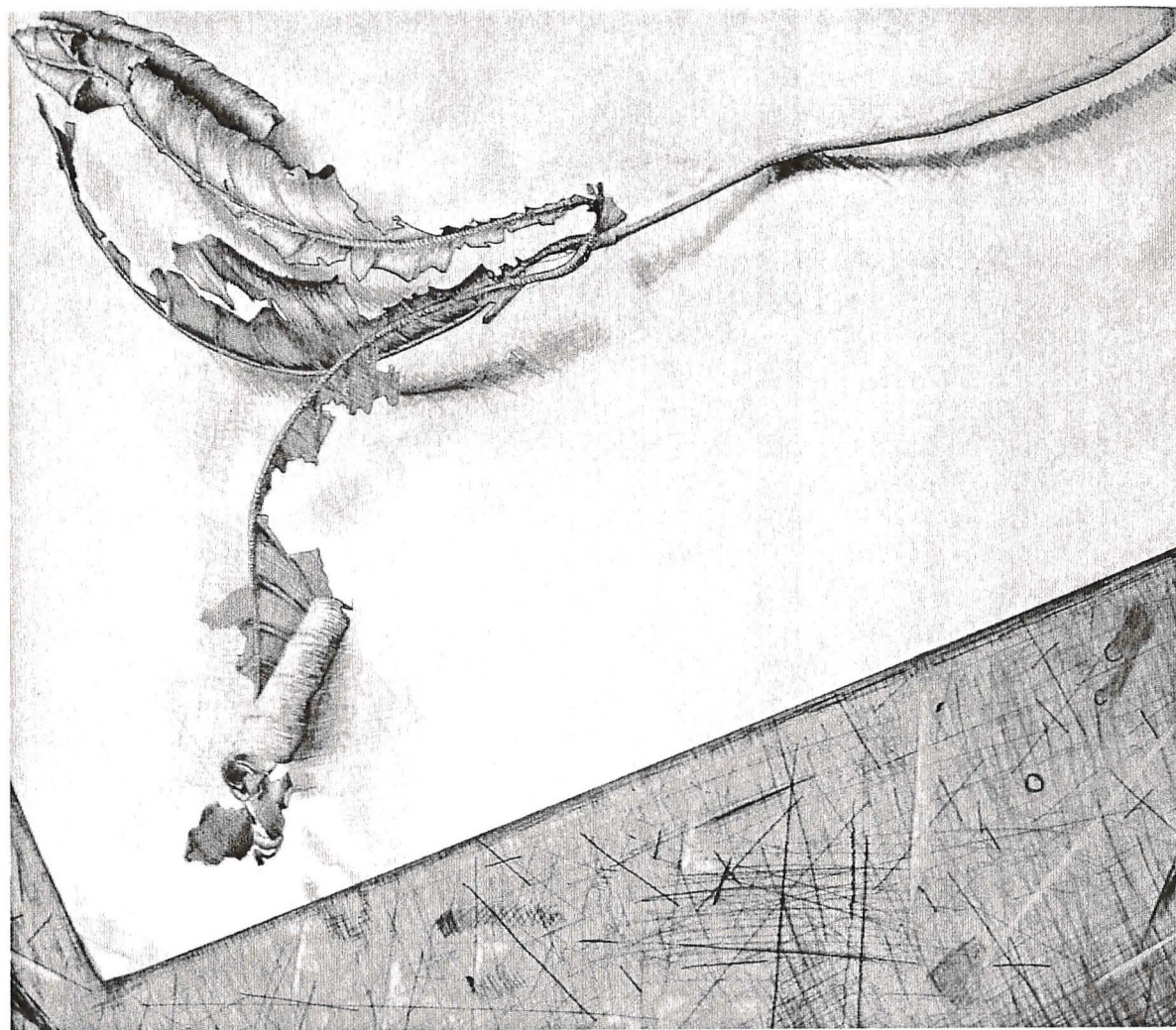
Travis

DUNDAS

Selection of Merit

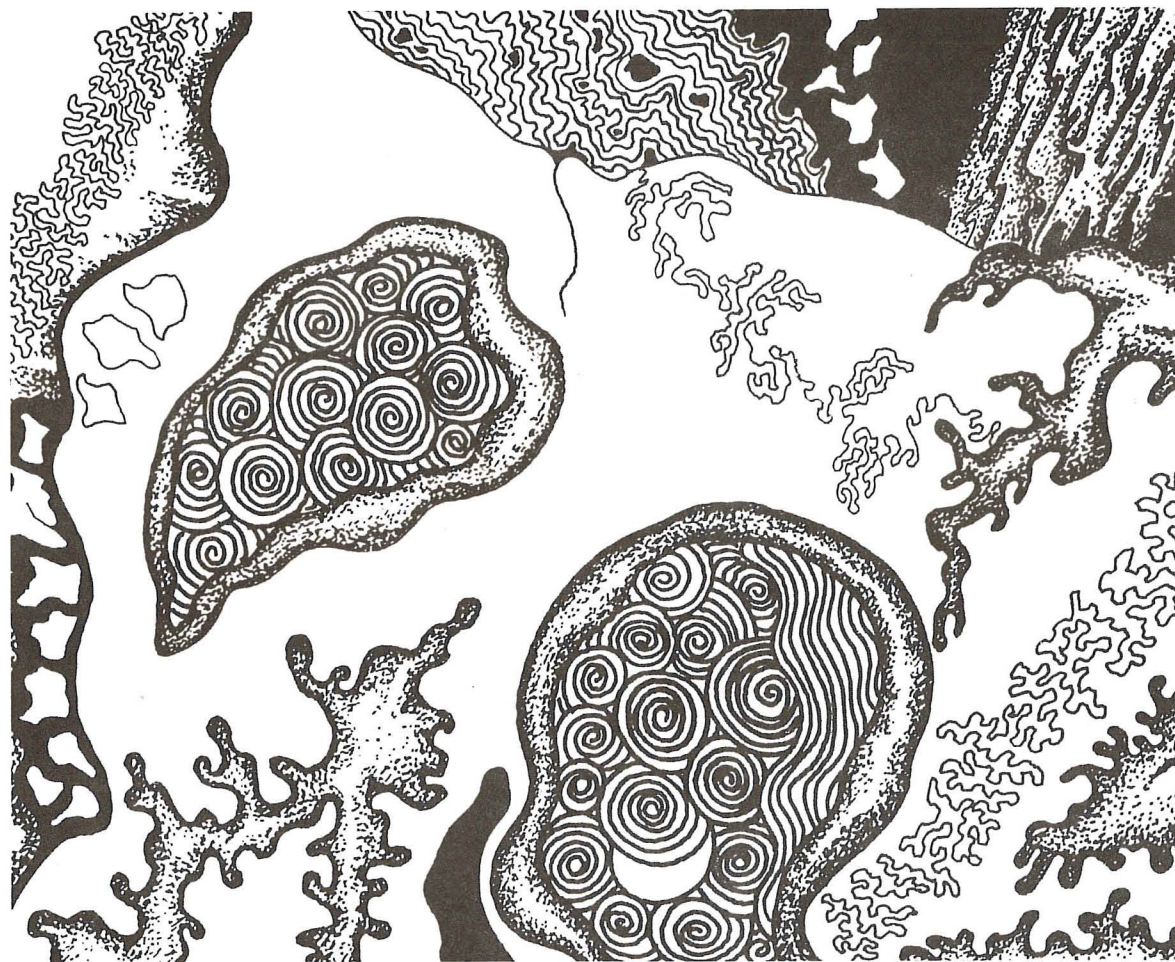
LEAF STUDY

Carrie



Selection of Merit

MAP TO THE FOREST OF DEER



David
MEDRANO

Selection of Merit

THE SNOW GLOBE

Jenna V.
GRAY

The Snow Globe

Given long ago

Back when my parents painted my world
pink and tulle.

A glass orb with a Dancer,

The perfect silhouette amidst all the fluff,

With toes pointed

For her perpetual fouette.

The Dancer whispered a promise of what
my life could be,

Play life by her rotation,

Steady and Rhythmic,

An oxymoron, Perfect happiness,

Would somehow be our result.

If I spun fast enough I wouldn't even have

to see

The truth behind this lie we told that my
audience believed.

His smile was Perfect, this friend

Who passed me bitter Coke

And the music reverberated, in a mind dizzy
with vodka.

Heat and bodies blurred;

And for the first time someone saw me fall.

My frame was steadied

By the act of his hand on my naked back.

I took comfort in his strength

On the cold walk back home;

Snow fell in thick clumps.

He whispered to me seduction, a rhythm he

played to Perfection

Of how pretty my dancer's frame, in a crisp
pink top.

I looked out from my globe of glassy naiveté

And my prism reflected colors that weren't
really there at all.

Into my room we came, his hands still on
me;

Only once leaving to ease the door shut.

His strength, a comfort no more

Onto my back he forced me,

And my eyes fell to the snow globe, rolled
beneath the bed.

She was still dancing, still smiling, still
performing

For an audience that had long since
forgotten her.

The globe in my hand steadied me then.

And my own strength a comfort

As my translucent innocence crashed against
his skull.

A fluid now bleeds,

From the cracks that spread like a spider's
web.

A beautiful Imperfection;

And do you know

It had never occurred to me,

All along she had been drowning.

Selection of Merit

MY GERMAN OMA

Kristi A.
GNIEWEK

Stands in sweltering kitchen,
amid scattered plates.
Cracking two fresh brown eggs,
over her ceramic country bowl,
as she whips up birthday cake
number 24 of 48 made each year.

Refusing to sit
and utter a sigh of relief.
She only serves
as she refills
millions of dishes,
as if it was her only purpose
In this American life.

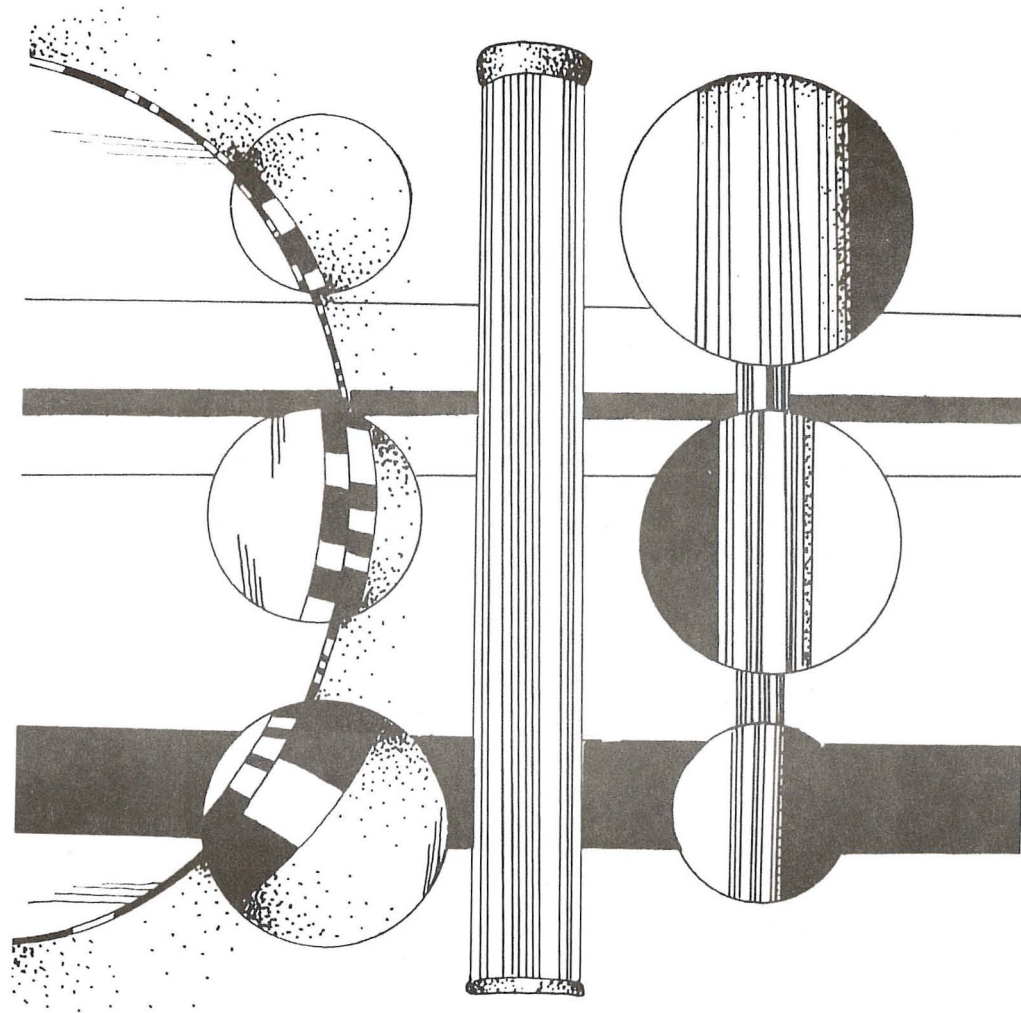
Fried potatoes and ham,
mushroom soup meatballs,
mayo dressing cucumbers
keep magically appearing.
She pushes seconds,
"Das mit gut, lika lika!"
"Need something to drink?"
"No thanks, Grandma,"

Then pushes a red plastic cup
full to the brim with milk
into my hesitant hand.
"Thanks, Grandma."

Arms wrapped around,
head pressed against,
sweaty navy vest over white blouse.
Hiding my guilt for secretly pouring
the milk out, beside her old brick house.

Selection of Merit

FREE MAGNIFICATION



Dayroll

MEDRANO

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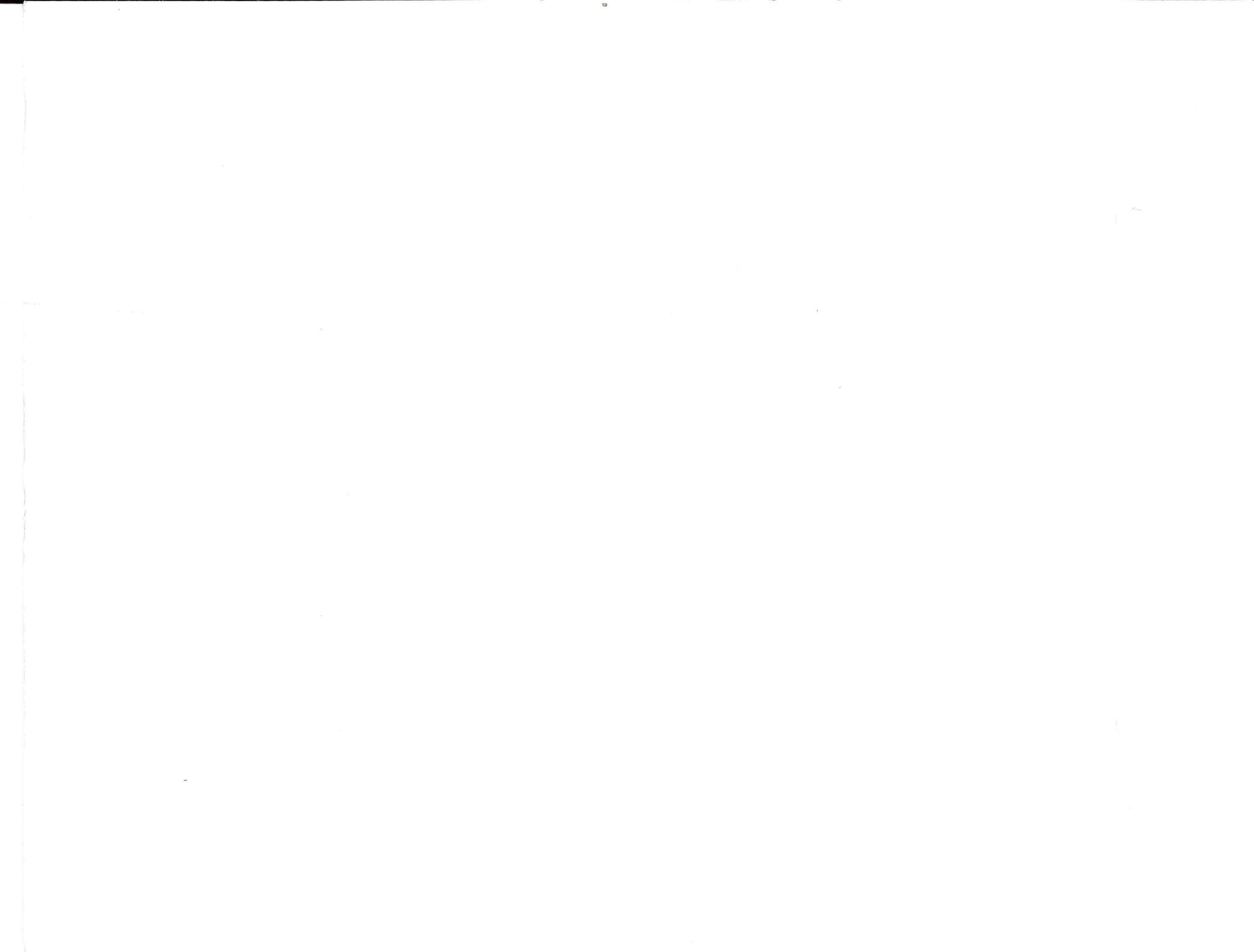


Colophon

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